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GARDENS
ILLUSTRATED

A YEAR OF PLANTS

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WELCOME

Welcome to *A Year of Plants,* the *Gardens Illustrated* guide to the most beautiful plants to grow now. From established, good garden growers to the newest cultivars of less familiar plants, the plants we've included are those our favourite nurserypeople, plantsmen, garden designers and head gardeners told us they would not garden without.

The guide includes trees, shrubs, bulbs, perennials and annuals. There are some new discoveries; *Silphium mohrii* is a large lemon-yellow composite flower that keeps going until frosts, and tried-and-tested favourites, such as the hart's tongue fern that is hard to beat in a shaded spot.

The plants are all recommended by people who have grown them and know them best. Look out for Fergus Garrett's superlative lily, Hans Kramer's recommendation for a delicate and graceful delphinium that will stop visitors in their tracks, and note plantswoman Derry Watkins' suggestion for possibly the most perfect perennial wallflower.

Also included are details of our favourite nurseries and suppliers in a sourcebook found at the back of the guide.

I hope you enjoy using *A Year of Plants* this year and for many years to come.

Lucy Bellamy

LUCY BELLAMY, EDITOR,
GARDENS ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE

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JASON INGRAM

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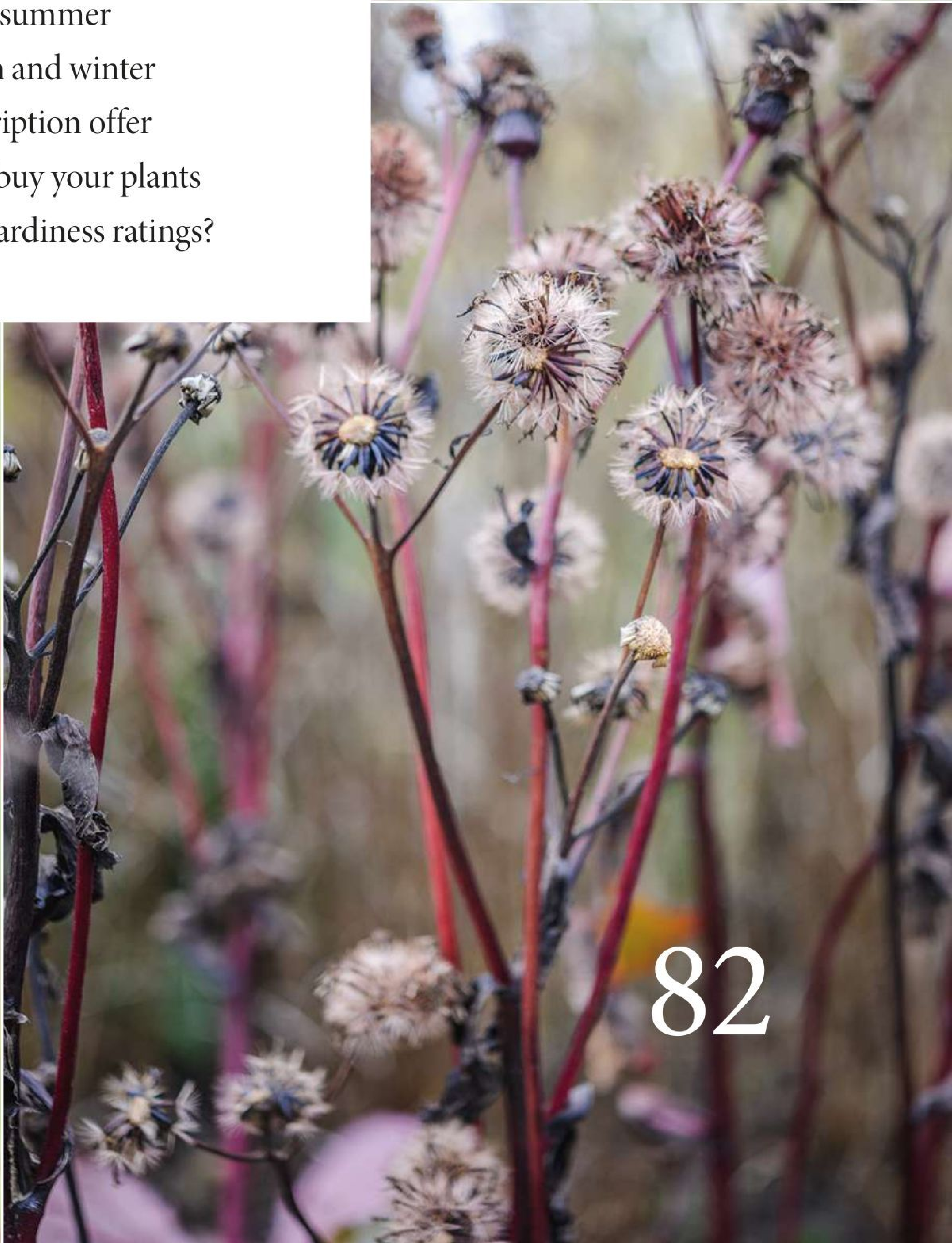

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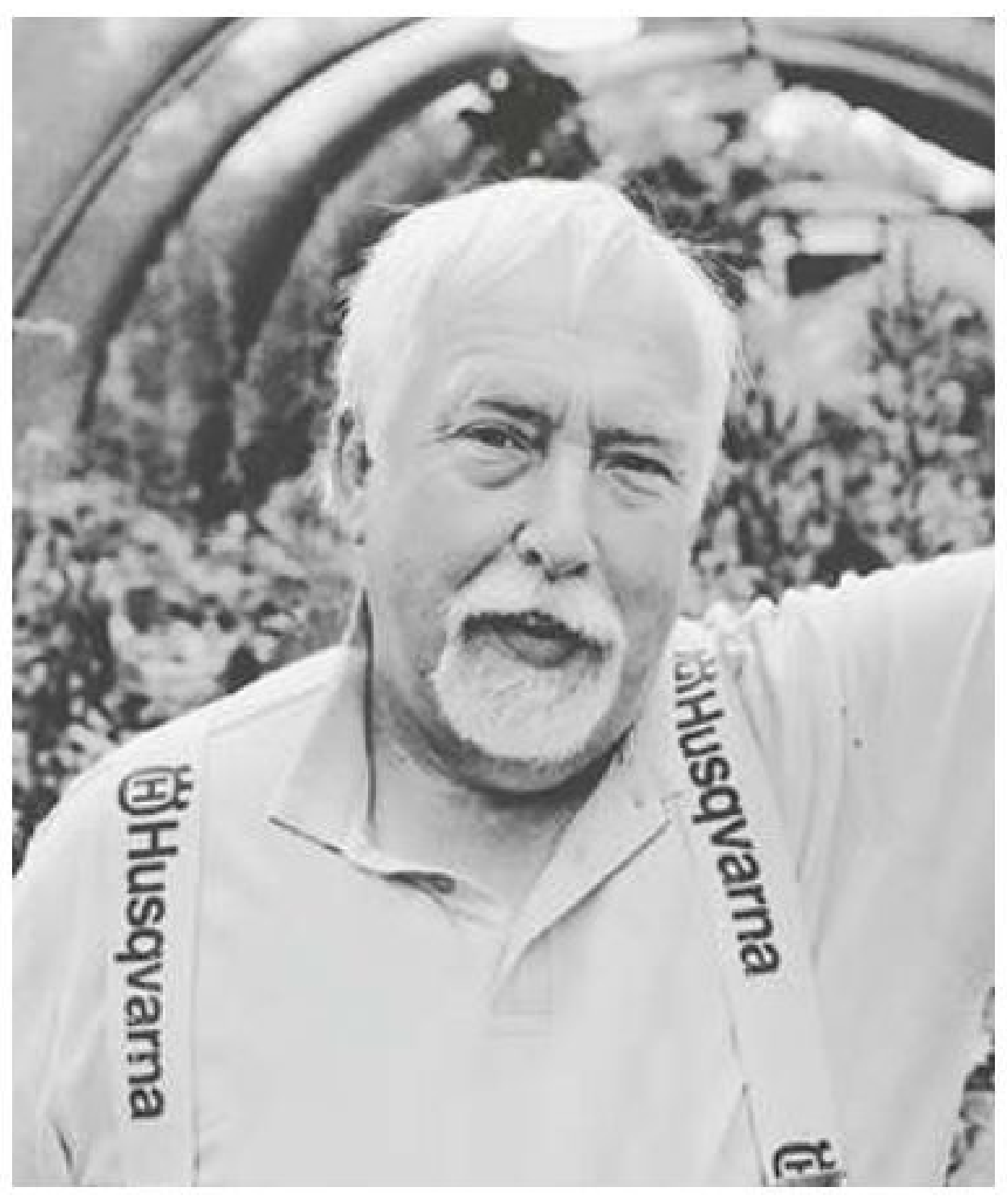


BOB BROWN

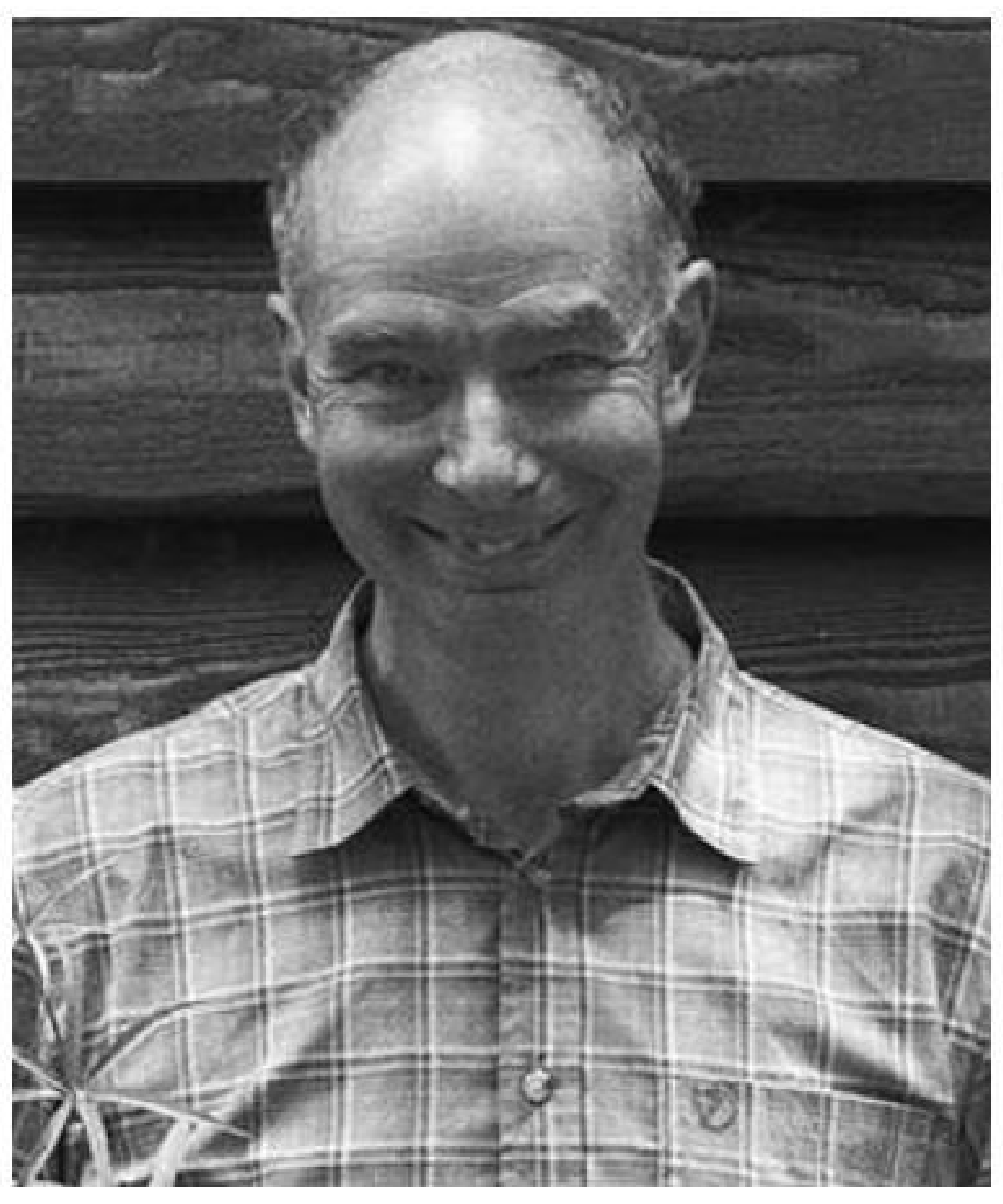
Bob owns Cotswold Garden Flowers, a magnet for experienced plant lovers, which stocks a huge range of rare and beautiful plants, from good old-fashioned varieties to newly introduced cultivars that are bred not only for their colour and form but also for their vigour, as well as plants newly introduced from the wild. **cgf.net**

DAN PEARSON

Dan is a plantsman and designer, and principal of London-based Dan Pearson Studio. Trained at RHS Wisley and the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, Dan was an early practitioner of naturalistic perennial planting in the UK. He travels widely to consult and design, and is a contributing editor for *Gardens Illustrated*. **danpearsonstudio.com**

FERGUS GARRETT

Fergus is head gardener at Great Dixter in East Sussex, having worked alongside Christopher Lloyd for 15 years. He also lectures, writes and serves on Royal Horticultural Society committees. The nursery at Great Dixter stocks a wide range of garden-worthy plants, some 80 per cent of them raised on site. **greatdixter.co.uk**



HANS KRAMER

After finishing horticultural college, Hans began growing plants in a field on his grandfather's farm. He is now one of Europe's most respected nurserymen, and co-owner of De Hessenhof, a specialist, organic plant nursery in the Netherlands where he and his wife Miranda grow around 6,000 outstanding perennials. **hessenhof.nl**

MARINA CHRISTOPHER

Marina studied biology and ecology before starting out as a nurserywoman. In 2002, she created Phoenix Perennial Plants, a nursery growing hardy and unusual plants, and regularly supplies plants to top designers. The author of *Late Summer Flowers* (Frances Lincoln, 2011), she lectures, writes and presents extensively on gardening.

CHRIS MARCHANT

Chris is co-owner of Orchard Dene Nurseries in Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, a wholesale grower specialising in hardy herbaceous plants. Orchard Dene works with top garden designers, and is stocked with around 1,400 varieties carefully chosen for their merits as 'landscape performance plants'. **orcharddene.co.uk**

DERRY WATKINS

Derry is a plantswoman and owner of Special Plants, a garden, nursery and online seed shop nursery near Bath in southwest England. She is the author of two books on greenhouse gardening and has introduced many unusual plants from plant-collecting trips to South Africa, India, Nepal, Chile, Turkey and Bulgaria. **specialplants.net**

MAT REESE

Mat has worked at Ness Botanic Gardens, RHS Wisley, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and Great Dixter, where he became assistant head gardener. He is now head gardener at Malverleys in Hampshire, where for the past seven years he has been designing and building a notable new English flower garden. **malverleys.co.uk**

JOHN HOYLAND

John is a writer and plantsman who divides his time between his gardens in Hertfordshire and the eastern Pyrenees in France. For several years he ran the award-winning Pioneer Plants in Hertfordshire, but now advises on planting design for several private gardens, including Glyndebourne, the opera house in East Sussex.

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE BOOK

AGM Holds an Award of Garden Merit, from the Royal Horticultural Society.

BB Bob Brown, **DP** Dan Pearson, **FG** Fergus Garrett, **HK** Hans Kramer, **MC** Marina Christopher, **CM** Chris Marchant, **DW** Derry Watkins, **MR** Mat Reese, **JH** John Hoyland.

Hardiness ratings have been included where available. For an explanation of what these mean see page 114.

GREAT DIXTER; CHARLIE HOPKINSON; ANDREW MONTGOMERY; SHARON PEARSON; SIR PAUL SMITH.

SPRING

As the days lengthen, shoots push up through the warming soil and with a foil of fresh-green foliage, the growing season starts. From useful all-year rounders to early workhouse plants and the fleetingly in flower, spring is a welcome sight.

JASON INGRAM

TULIPA 'GAVOTA'

The flowers of *Tulipa* 'Gavota' have a lovely shape – square at the base and slightly flared at the mouth with pointed tips. The distinctly medieval colour combination of burgundy with golden yellow margins is quite striking, although difficult to blend with other tulips or flowers. I use it against a solid foil of fresh, green foliage, such as lupins or sweet williams, which will go on to engulf the old flower stems after the tulips have finished and continue the show. 'Gavota' can be perennial if it likes your soil, but I replant each year to ensure a good display. AGM.

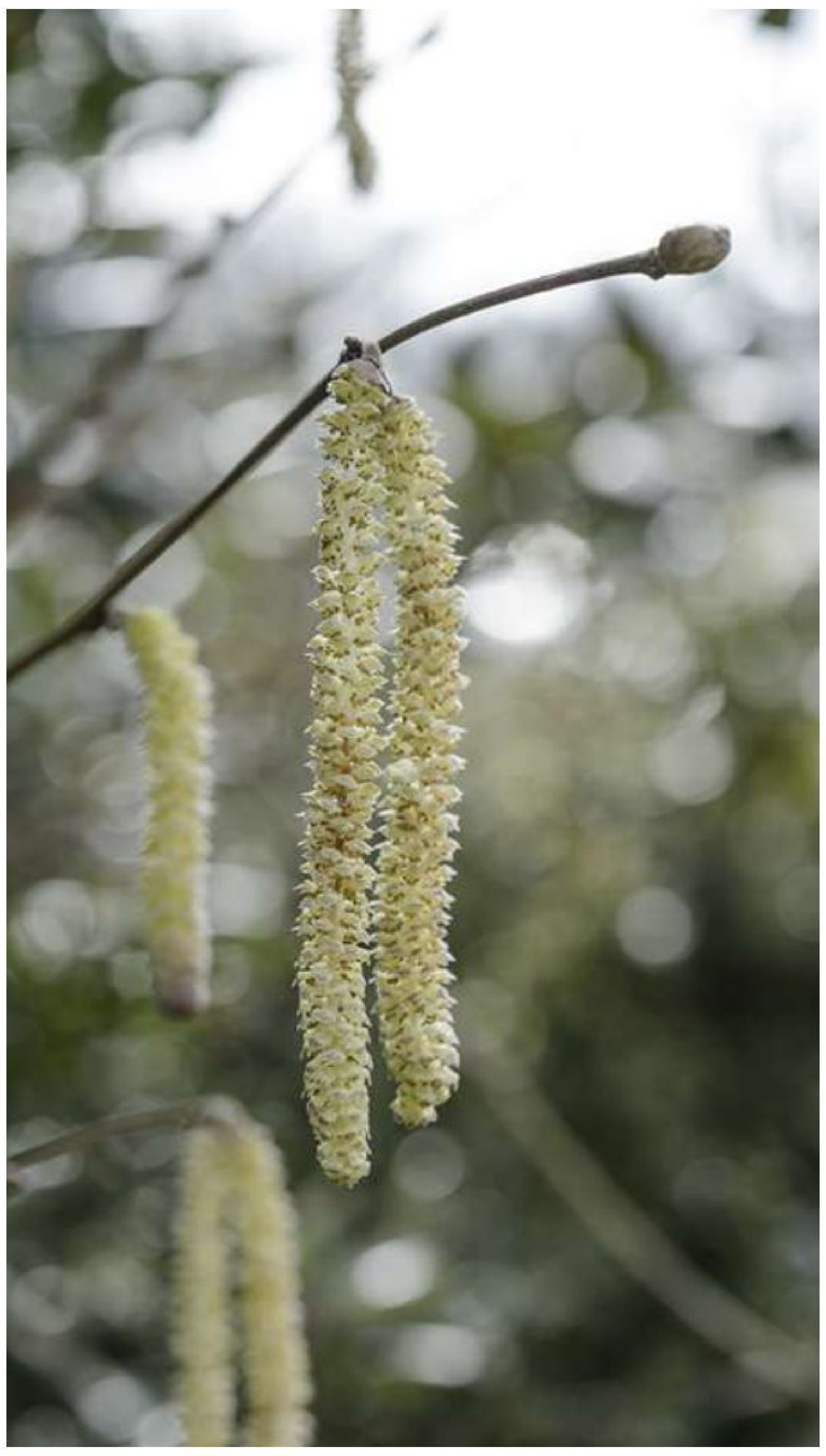
Height 45cm.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Any good soil.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.
Season April. **MR**

> THE PETALS HAVE EXQUISITE BLUISH-PURPLE STIPPLING AROUND A YELLOW BEARD
>
> *IRIS HISTRIOIDES* 'HALKIS'

CORYLUS AVELLANA

From leafless twigs, long, yellow, male hazel catkins emerge in late winter to remind me that the growing season has started. Closer inspection reveals tiny, red, female flowers adhering tight to the stem. The catkins are always my signal of spring and I look forward to their emergence. Hazel coppices with honeysuckle are favoured by dormice and hazel twigs are invaluable for supporting plants in herbaceous borders. In autumn I compete with squirrels to harvest young hazelnuts when the flesh is milky and sweet.

Height 6m.
Origin Europe, western Asia and northern Africa.
Conditions Sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 4a-8b.
Season Catkins February to March. **MC**



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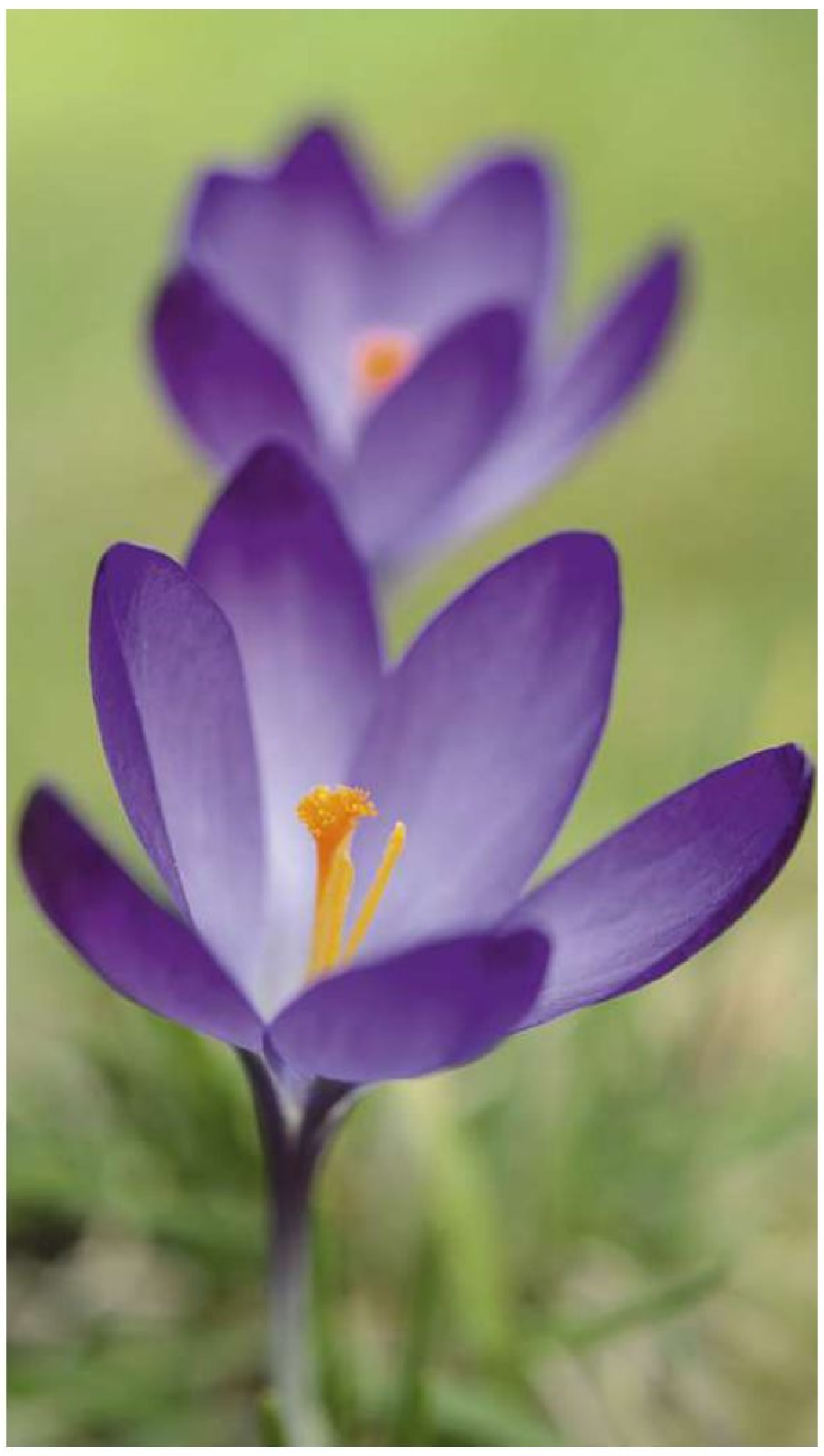


JASON INGRAM

CROCUS 'RUBY GIANT'

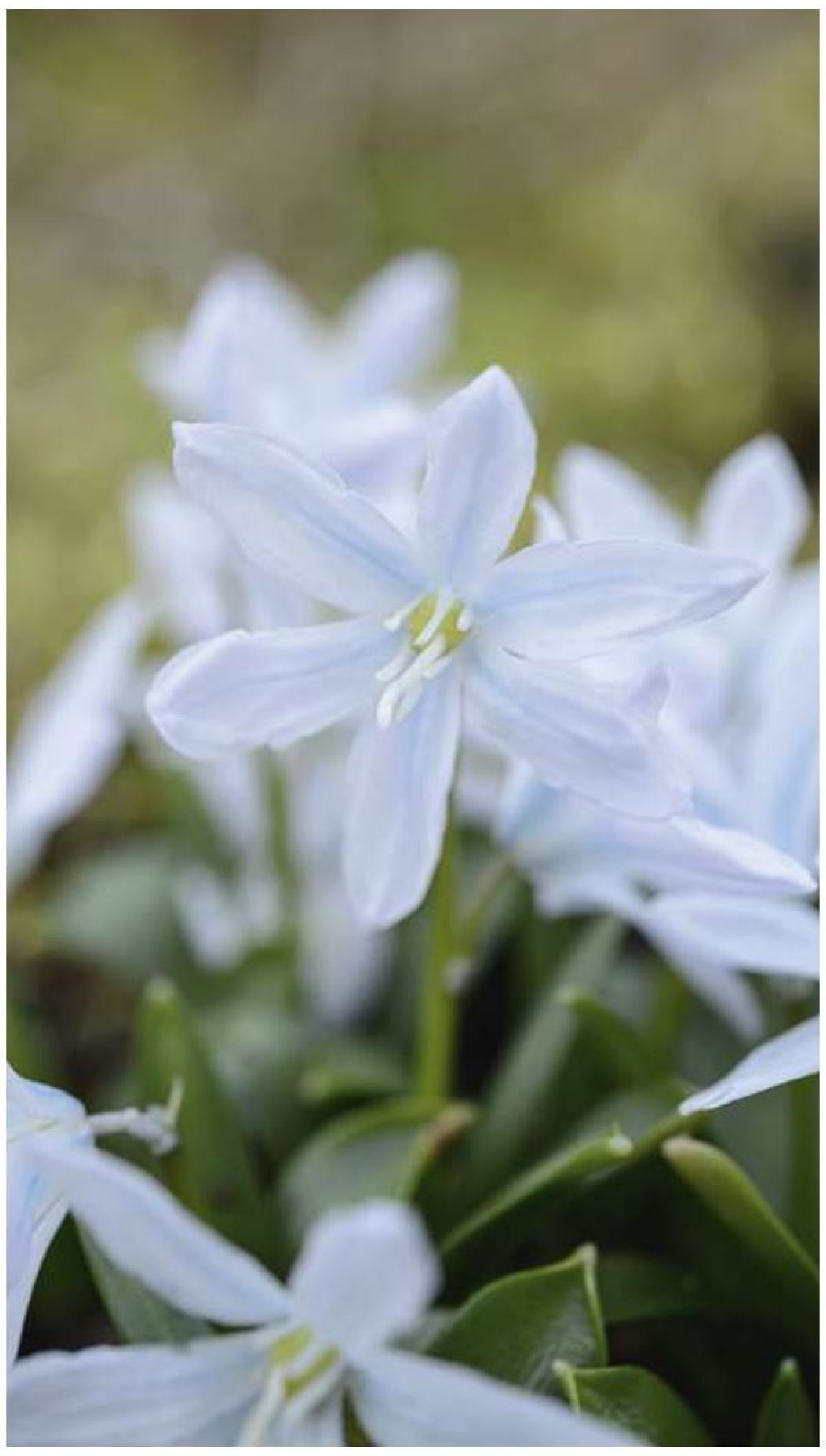
A sterile hybrid of *C. tommasinianus* but with wider petals in a deeper shade of purple. Flowering in late February, it provides a valuable source of nectar for early bumblebees and on a mild winter's day its delicate fragrance will fill the air. Although it does not set seed, colonies form quite rapidly by division of the corms. They look equally good growing through short turf or beneath winter-flowering shrubs. If you have a problem with grey squirrels digging up corms, try placing fine chicken wire on top of your planted crocuses before you replace the grass.

Height 9cm.
Origin Of hybrid origin.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.
Season March to April. **MC**

SCILLA MISCHTSCHENKOANA 'TUBERGENIANA'

This is one of the earliest *Scilla* species to flower, pushing its ice-blue flowers through the earth before any foliage. The flower stems elongate to hold the blooms aloft with a delicate fragrance that has the bumblebees flocking to find them; an important source of nectar at this time of the year. To enhance the beauty of the flowers, there is a darker central blue line on the backs of the petals. Quiet, elegant and charming, it quickly forms small colonies. AGM.

Height 10cm.
Origin Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Iran.
Conditions Moist soil in sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.
Season March. **MC**



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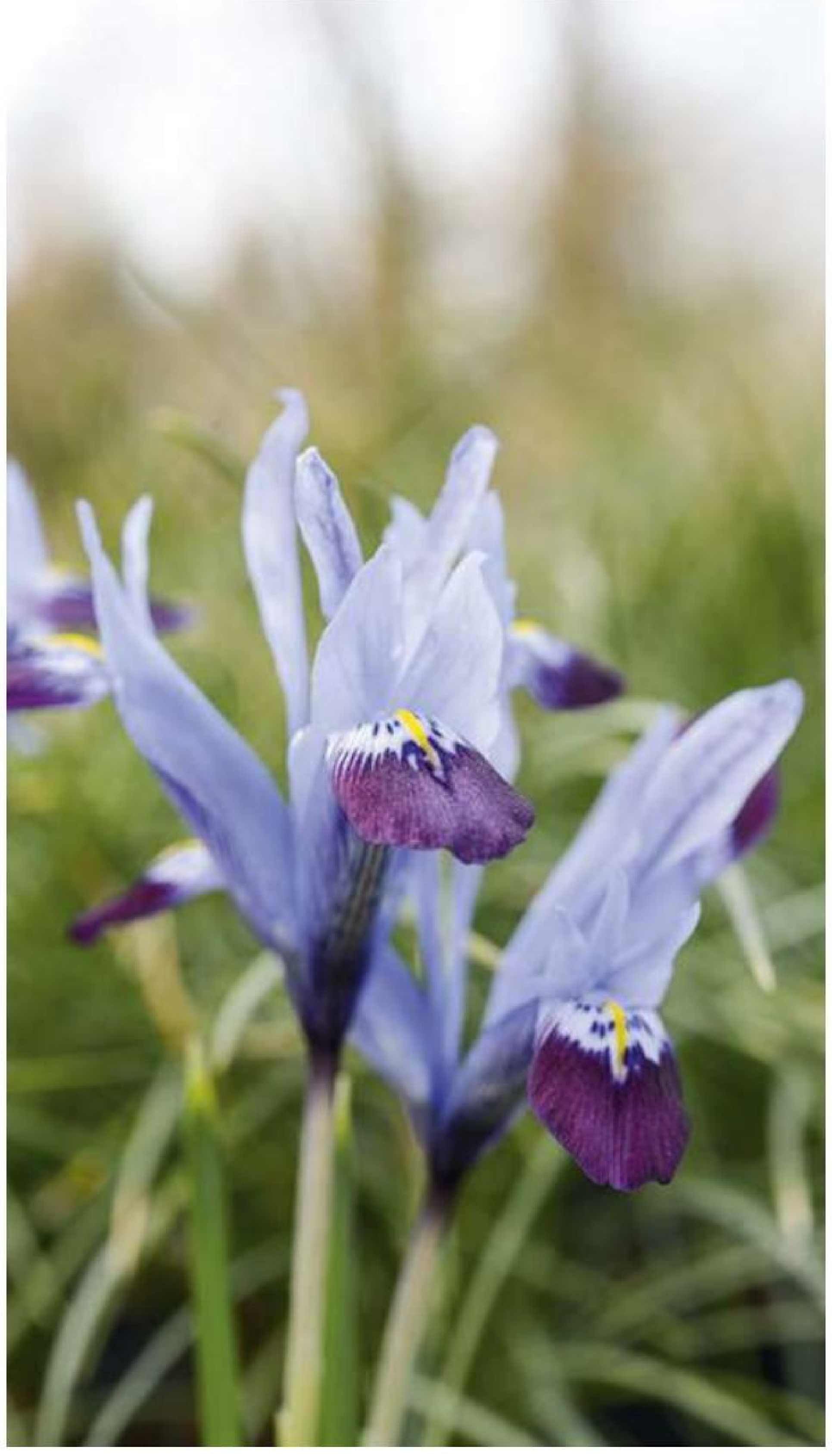


JASON INGRAM

IRIS HISTRIOIDES 'HALKIS'

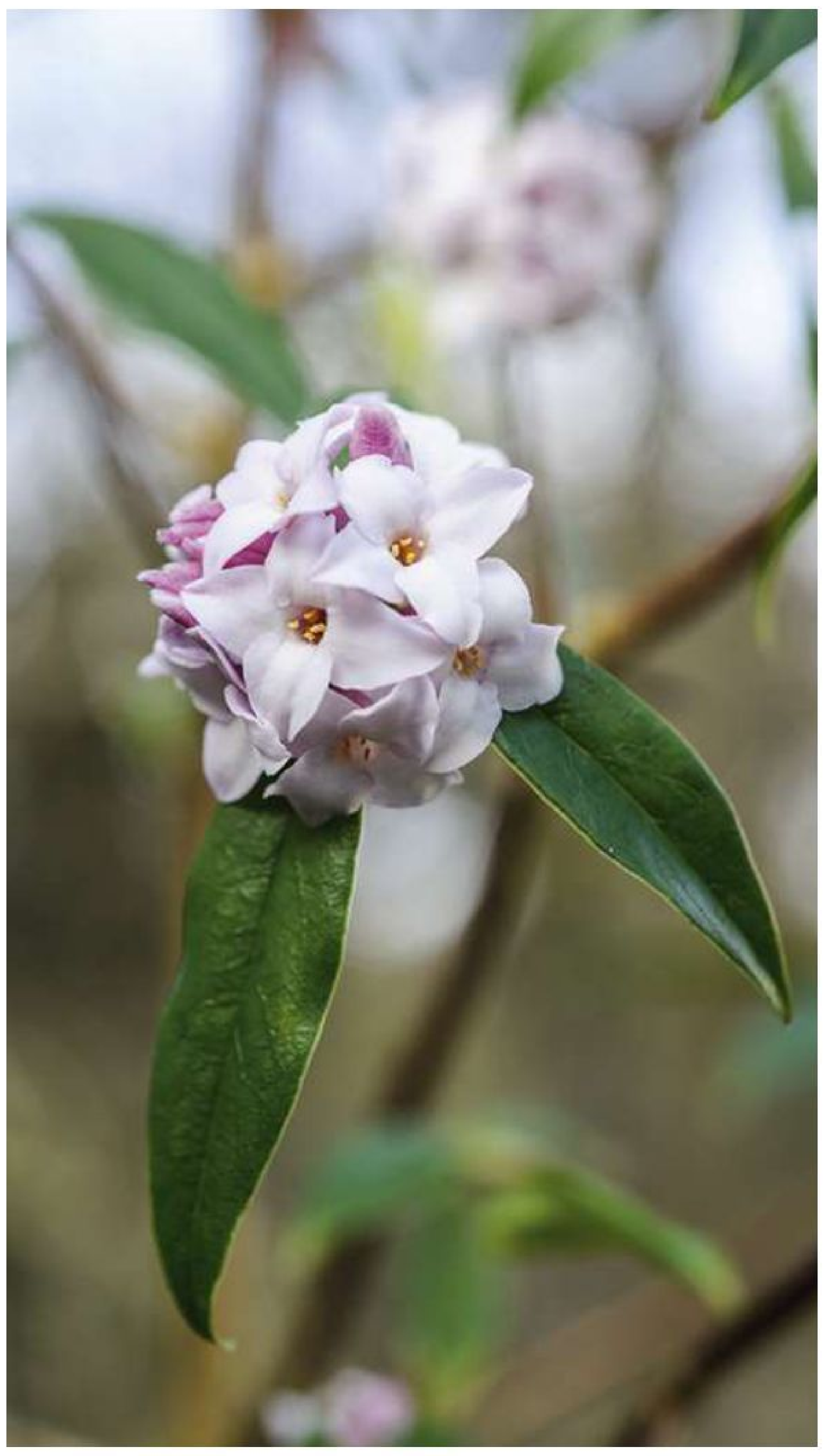
I am always amazed that the delicate reticulate irises brave the late winter weather. This one is a relative newcomer to me and I grow it on a raised gritty bed above my heavy, waterlogged, clay soil. It has soft-blue petals with purple falls and an exquisite bluish-purple stippling around a slender yellow beard. I find reticulate irises rarely persist for more than a few years on my site but they are relatively inexpensive to purchase and are such a welcome sight as the days lengthen and the new growing season is about to begin.

Height 12cm.
Origin Cultivar of *Iris histrioides*, which originates in Turkey.
Conditions Well-drained soil in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.
Season February to March. **MC**

DAPHNE BHOLUA 'JACQUELINE POSTILL'

A slightly rangy, semi-evergreen shrub that's incredibly fragrant and very early to bloom, it fades into the background until February when your nose sends you scurrying to find fat little clusters of perfect pink and white flowers, nestling demurely at the base of the leaves, spilling over with voluptuous scent. Try to find a sheltered site so the fragrance is not blown away. Known as the Nepalese paper plant, the bark makes extremely fine, lightweight, but tough, paper traditionally used for Buddhist sacred texts. AGM.

Height 2.5m.
Origin Nepal.
Conditions Full sun or light shade; good soil, good drainage but not dry.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.
Season January to February. **DW**



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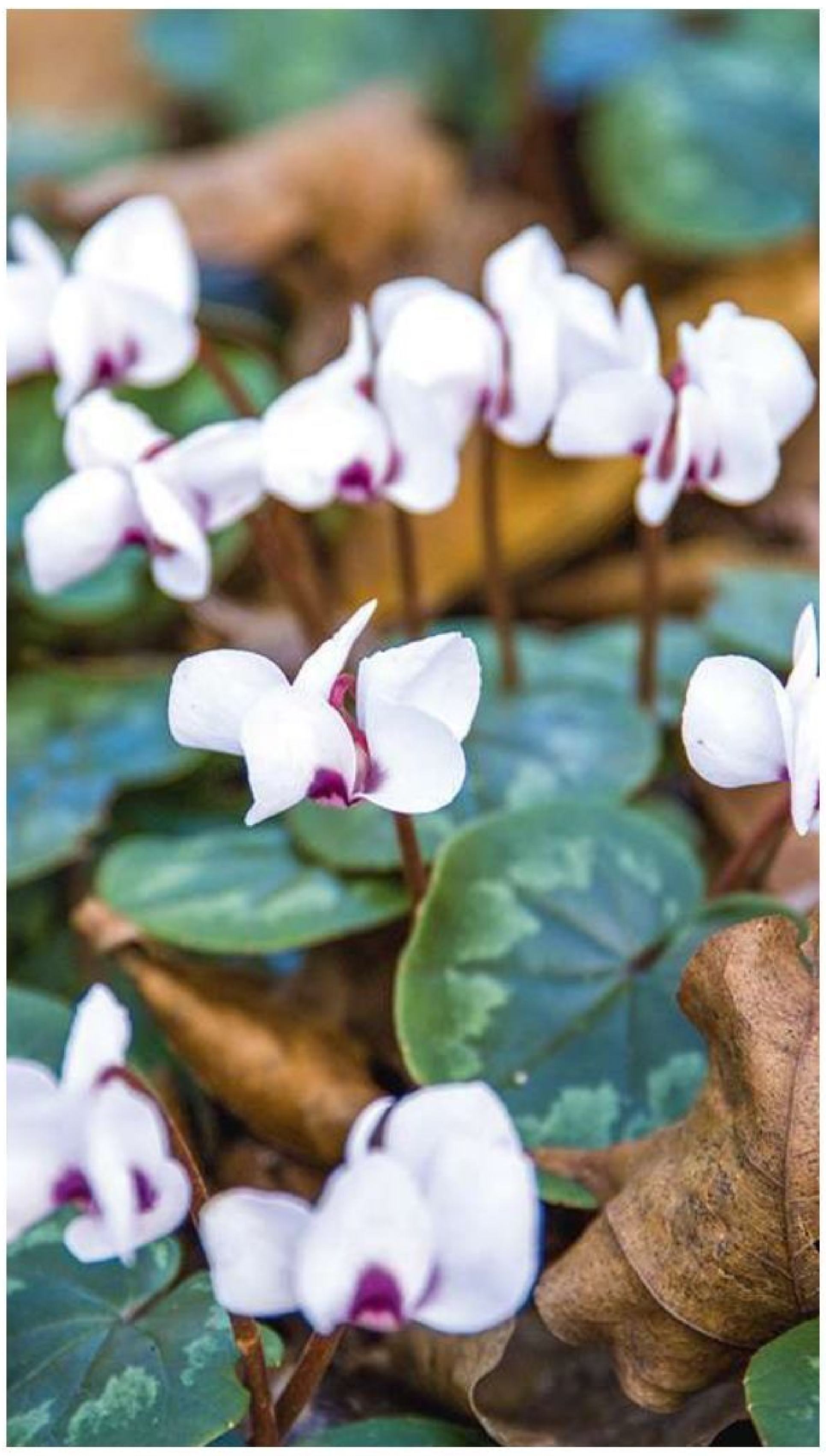


MAAYKE DE RIDDER

CYCLAMEN COUM F. *PALLIDUM* 'ALBUM'

When there is a layer of snow on the ground, the site of the more usual carmine-pink cyclamen can lift the spirits, but without snow this white form is perhaps a better choice. The dainty white flowers always have a pink tip at their base and the leaves can sometimes be beautifully patterned too. In our continental winters, we use mulch that contains leaf mould and a layer of grit. The grit helps to germinate the seeds so in a few years you can have hundreds more of these charming plants.

Height 10cm.
Origin Bulgaria, Turkey, Caucasus and Lebanon.
Conditions Semi-shade, in soil that is slightly alkaline, but not too wet.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.
Season January to March. **HK**

> PENDULOUS FLOWERING RACEMES, LIKE EARRINGS, ADORN MAHOGANY STEMS
>
> *STACHYURUS PRAECOX*

MAAYKE DE RIDDER

HELLEBORUS FOETIDUS WALTER FISK GROUP

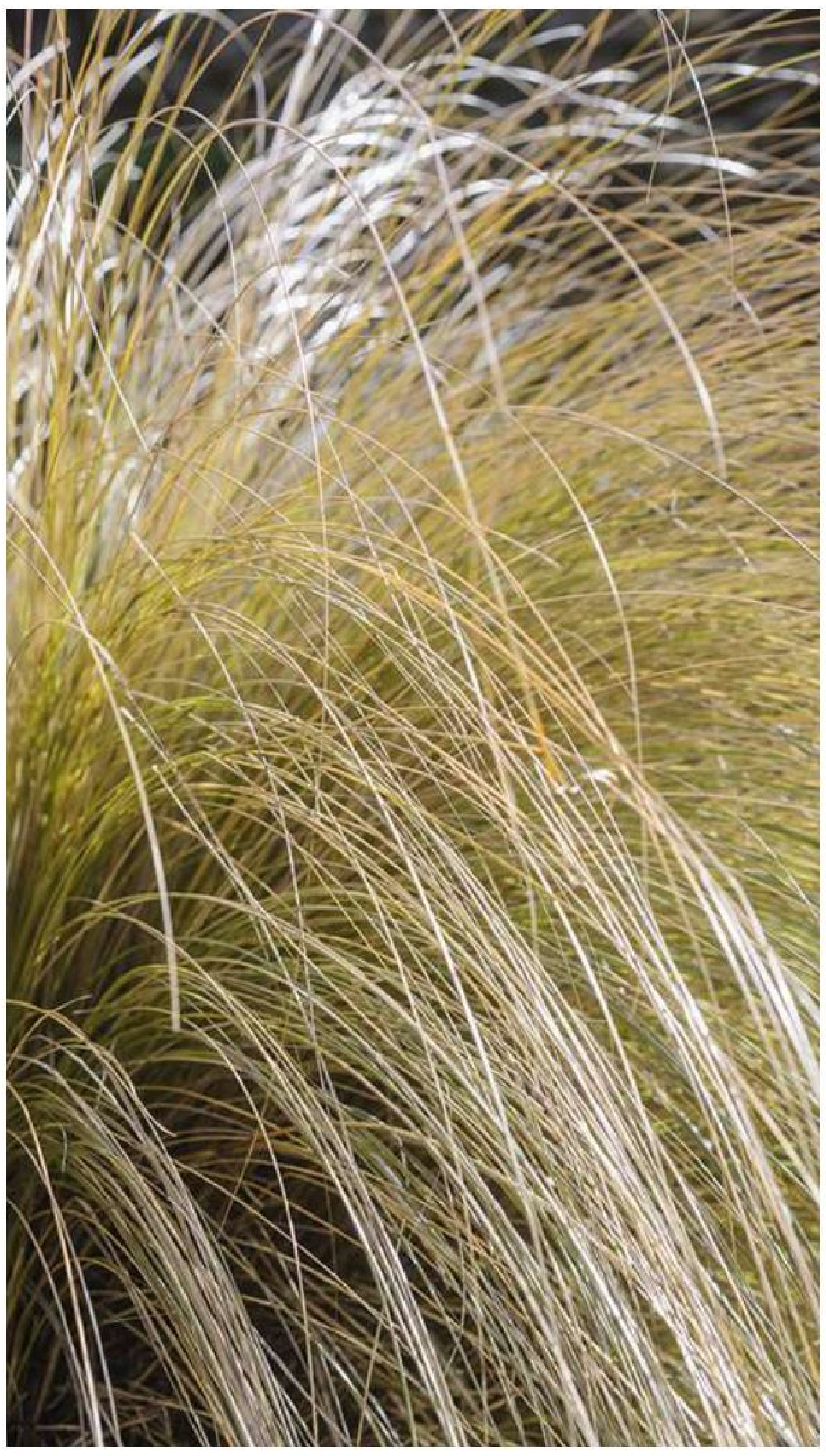
Although this is the shortest-living hellebore – it rarely lives longer than three to four years – I couldn't do without it. It is a good, all-round plant, starting with attractive, deeply divided leaves that are a dark green. Some cultivars, such as 'Sopron', can have a silvery sheen to the leaf, while this has striking beetroot-coloured stems that contrast well with the pale-green flowers. These begin as rosettes that start to elongate as the weather gets cooler, then form light-green buds that gradually open over winter. AGM.

Height 50-70cm.
Origin Western and southern Europe, western Asia.
Conditions Good drainage.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.
Season Flowers February to April, with evergreen foliage. **HK**

CHIONOCHLOA RUBRA

My favourite grass every month of the year, but I notice it more early in the year because the rest of the world can look so dreary. The fine, bronze leaves fountain up and out, sweeping the ground gracefully around the outer edge (don't plant it too near a path as you can trip yourself up). It shimmers as it moves, catching the light, especially the low rays of the winter sun. AGM.

Height 1m.
Origin New Zealand (called red tussock grass there, a bit of a misnomer, although plants from seed do vary in colour).
Conditions Full sun and good drainage, in any good garden soil.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 7a-10b. Has thrived in my Cotswold garden for more than 12 years, including through -15ºC.
Season All year round. **DW**



JASON INGRAM

JASON INGRAM

STACHYURUS PRAECOX

As we emerge from the gloomy greys of winter, I am always drawn to the elegant simplicity of this small, deciduous shrub. Pendulous flowering racemes, like oversized drop earrings, adorn burnished mahogany stems, as yet unclothed by leaves. Spring brings a proliferation of bright-yellow flowers to the garden, but those of *S. praecox* are of a softer, paler, creamy hue than most, and marry well with the many emerging greens at this time of year. Viewed from a distance, the branches gently arch under the sheer weight of their flowery load. AGM.

Height 4m.
Origin Japan and nearby islands.
Conditions Easily grown in moist woodland soil in partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Season Flowers February to March. **CM**

MAAYKE DE RIDDER

HELLEBORUS ATRORUBENS

In Slovenia, where it grows in the wild, this hellebore – seldom seen in cultivation – starts flowering in April but in the mild, unstable winters of northwest Europe it usually starts to flower in February. With so many hybrids now flooding European nurseries, it is refreshing to see the subtle charm of the true species. In this form the flowers are purple-black but in the wild most plants have much more green to them. This is the only species where the petals, which are in fact sepals, hold their colour long after pollination. What's more, it's deciduous so you don't have to worry about cutting leaves in the winter.

Height 30cm.
Origin Slovenia, northwestern Croatia.
Conditions Fertile soil in full sun or some shade of deciduous trees.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.
Season March to April. **HK**

ASCENDING BRANCHES ARE DRAPED IN LAX NEEDLES THAT SHIMMER IN THE WIND

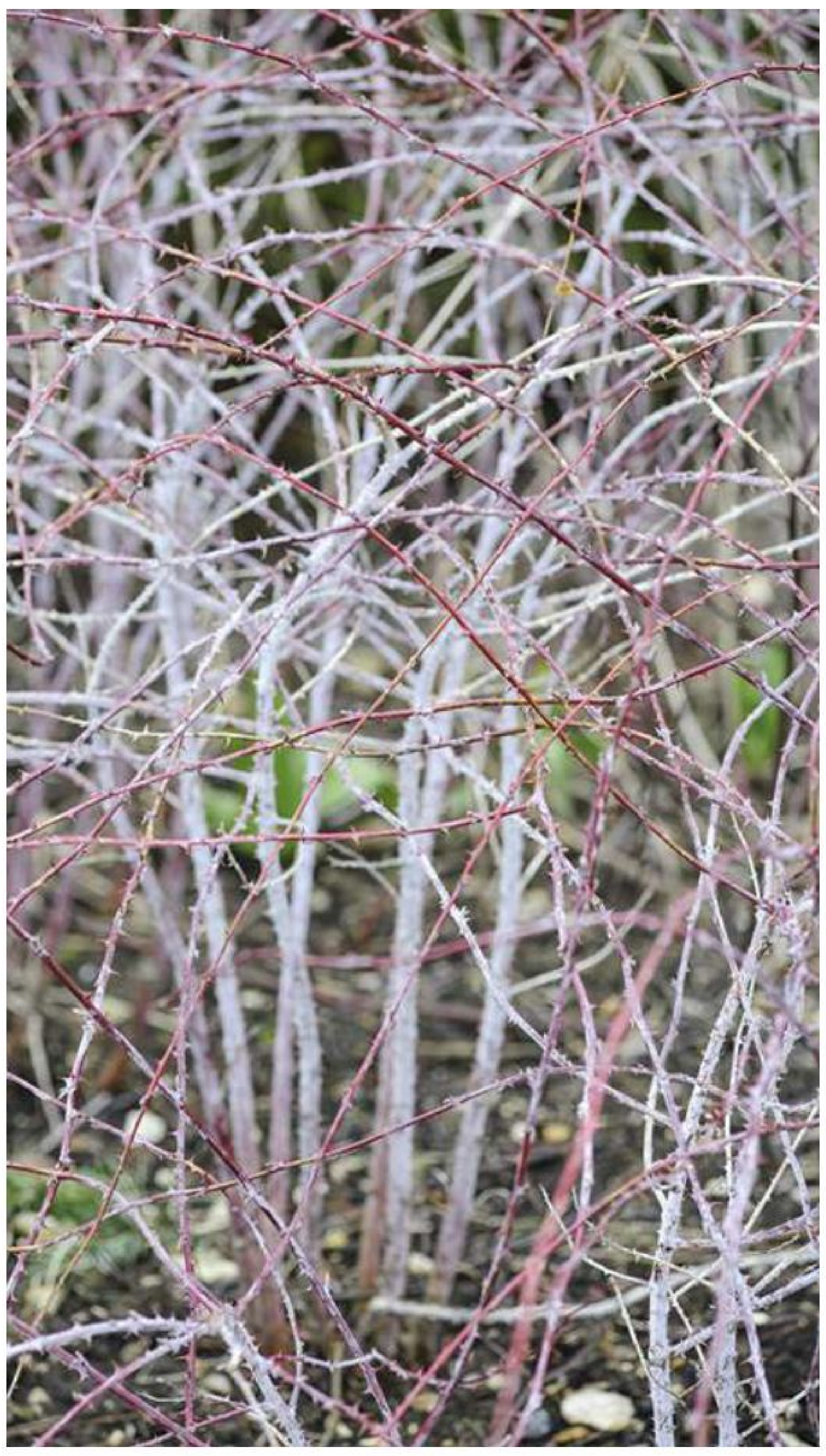
PINUS PATULA

GALANTHUS NIVALIS SCHARLOCKII GROUP

This old form of *Galanthus nivalis* is instantly recognisable for its spathe (a green, narrow, leaf-like structure behind the flower), which is split right along the centre. Although you can't quite see it in this image, the spathe stands upright, like a comical pair of elongated ears that are responsible for its common name of donkey's ears – in the Netherlands it's also called rabbit's ears. There is some debate on its true origin but it was first discovered in 1868 on a tributary of the River Rhine. Given some extra compost, it does well on our sandy soil.

Height 15cm.
Origin Germany.
Conditions Semi-shade; fertile soil.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.
Season January and February. **HK**

MAAYKE DE RIDDER



JASON INGRAM

RUBUS COCKBURNIANUS 'GOLDENVALE'

This cultivar features attractive foliage and vivid stem colour, and is less vigorous than the straight species. The new growth gives the whitest stems, so I cut all canes flush with the ground in spring and plant annual poppies in gaps between the crowns. The developing mounds of golden foliage contrast well with the red poppy flowers in May. In June, when the poppies fade, the shoots continue to grow and make a golden thicket for summer. The white twigs return in winter to cast their ghostly tracery against the dark soil. AGM.

Height 1m.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Any soil, not too dry in summer.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season All year round. **MR**

NARCISSUS LOBULARIS

This confusing and variable species has been a playground (or you could even say a nightmare) for botanists as they try to unravel what belongs where. But in the horticultural sense, I am considering the pale primrose-yellow form of our native Lent lily. This is a pretty daffodil that sits comfortably in the garden surroundings, unlike some of the modern overdone cultivars that may jar in a more naturalistic setting. Plant in loose drifts in meadows with primroses, cowslips and snakeshead fritillaries for best effect. Once established, bulbs will gradually clump up.

Height 25-35cm.
Origin Europe.
Conditions Any moist soil; full sun in meadow or deciduous woodland.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5b-10b.
Season March to April. **MR**

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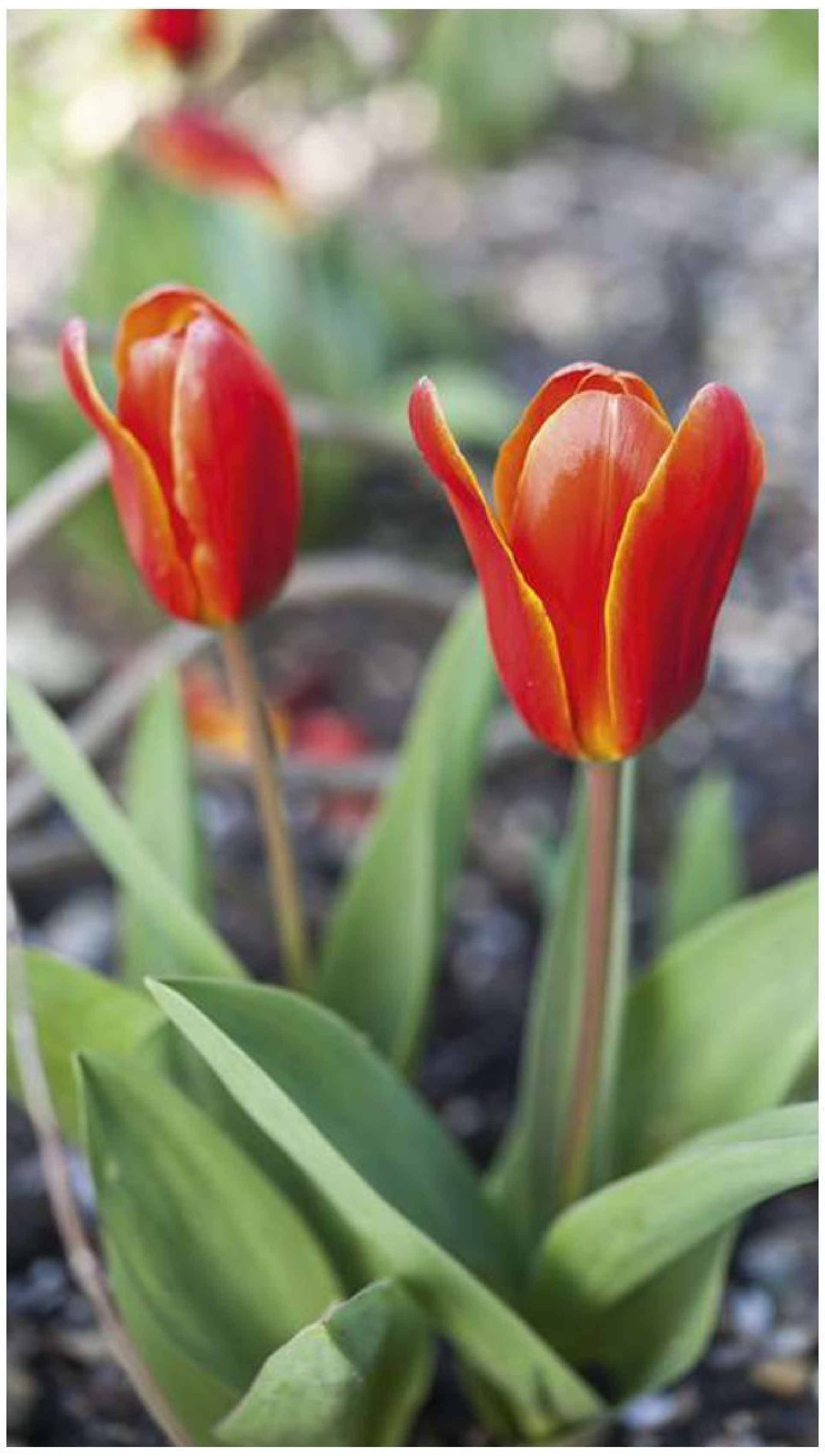


JASON INGRAM

TULIPA 'EARLY HARVEST'

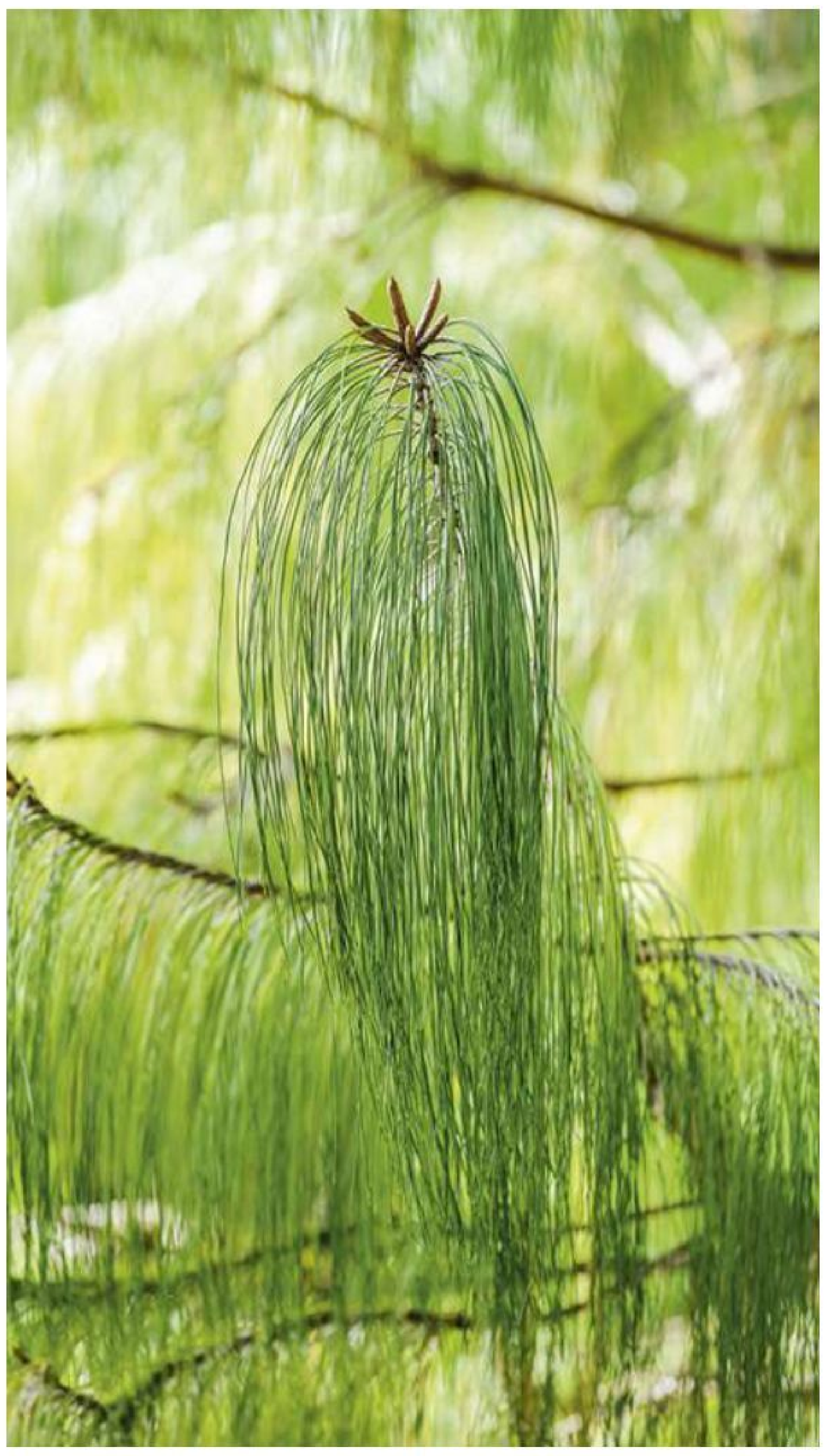
This is always our first tulip in flower and we await with excited anticipation the jolt of the flaming blooms that herald the start of the tulip season at Malverleys. On a sunny day the flowers yawn wide open, revealing reddish-yellow stars. In autumn we plant the bulbs between daylily crowns whose developing foliage marries well with the tulip flowers, and as they age, are consumed by the growing daylily leaves. Often the bulbs from previous plantings persist for a few years and flower three weeks before the newly planted bulbs. 'Early Harvest' is tough and can take all weathers – even snow. AGM.

Height 25cm.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Free-draining soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.
Season April to May. **MR**

PINUS PATULA

This elegant Mexican pine is a real head-turner, and a plant that often draws comments from admirers. The overall habit is that of a weeping effect, and it is more than a little reminiscent of a well-groomed Yorkshire terrier. It is a beautiful tree with slightly ascending branches draped in long, lax needles that shimmer in the wind. Plant to capture the morning or evening sun. It is a quick grower, and like many other fast-growing trees the root system lags behind – so be sure to stake it. Note that it may struggle in colder areas of the UK. AGM.

Height 15-20m.
Origin Mexico.
Conditions Free-draining soil; sunny, sheltered site.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 7a-11.
Season All year round. **MR**



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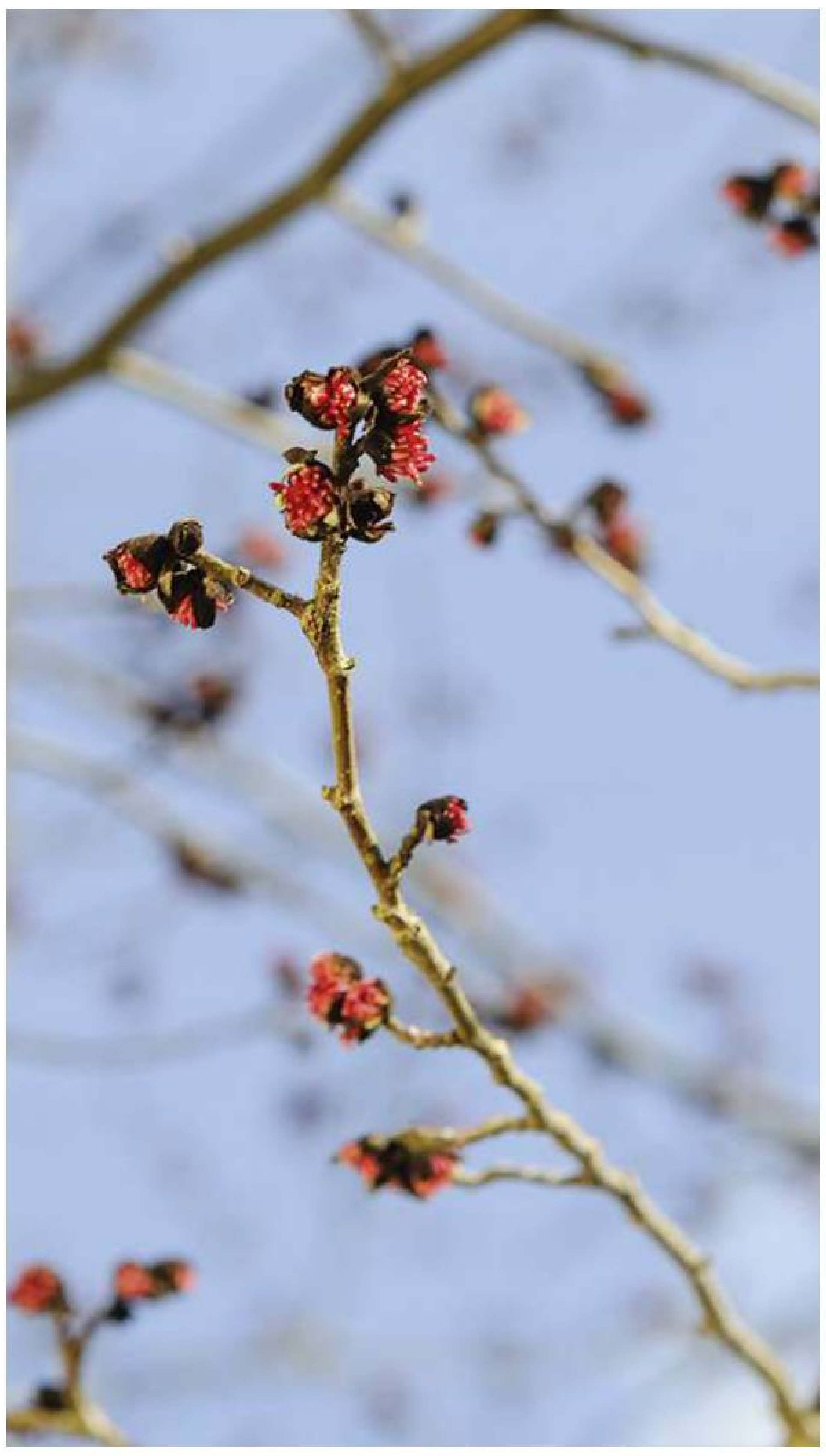


JASON INGRAM

PARROTIA PERSICA

I planted a *Parrotia persica*, or Persian ironwood, by my front steps, intending to walk under its down-sweeping branches one day. I'm already in love with its sinuous limbs of lustrous grey bark, its leaves, which turn butter-yellow for me – but can turn red, orange and purple on acid soils – and above all its little ruby-red flowers, which I never noticed until I had to walk close by it every day. They look like tiny witch hazel flowers and, when covered in snow, remind me of drops of blood.

Height 4-8m.
Origin Iran.
Conditions Tough and obliging. Tolerant of almost any conditions, sun or light shade, acid or alkaline, exposed or sheltered.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.
Season March to April. **DW**

SHARON PEARSON

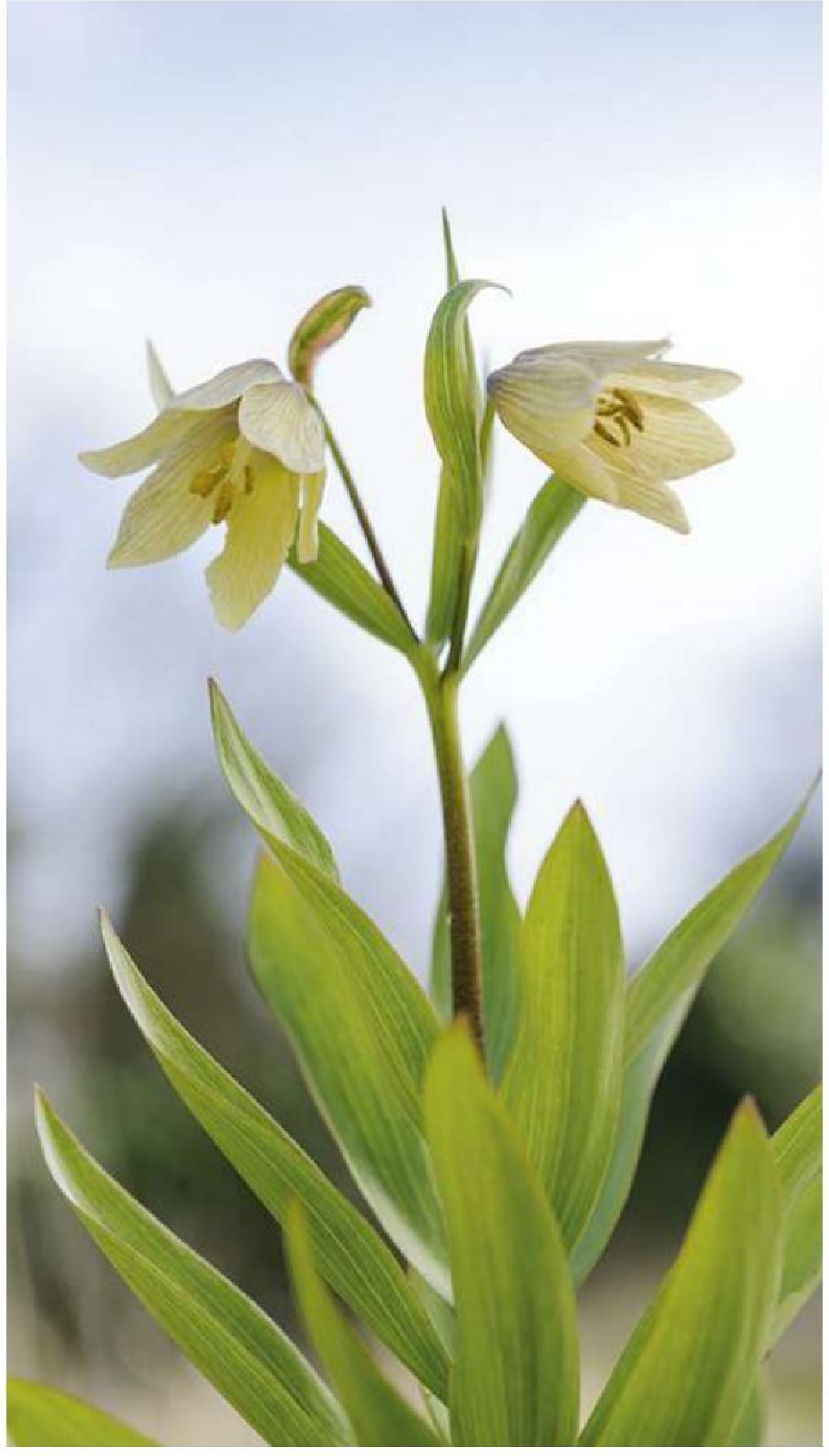
CLEMATIS CIRRHOSA VAR. *BALEARICA*

This enchanting evergreen climber characteristically scrambles into its neighbours, forming an amorphous body decorated throughout with small, glossy green, ferny leaves. These turn bronze with the onset of cold weather. The flowers are scented and delicate and hang like pale yellow-green bells with recurved petal tips revealing the seductive maroon, lightly freckled centre. Plants flower from early December through to March and cut stems can last well in the vase if bases are dipped in boiling water.

Height 5m.
Origin Introduced in 1761 from the Balearic Islands. Found mainly on Minorca.
Conditions Full sun to partial shade in good soil.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 9b-10a.
Season December to March. **FG**

FLOWERS HANG LIKE PALE YELLOW-GREEN BELLS WITH RECURVED PETAL TIPS

CLEMATIS CIRRHOSA VAR. *BALEAREA*



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FRITILLARIA RADDEANA

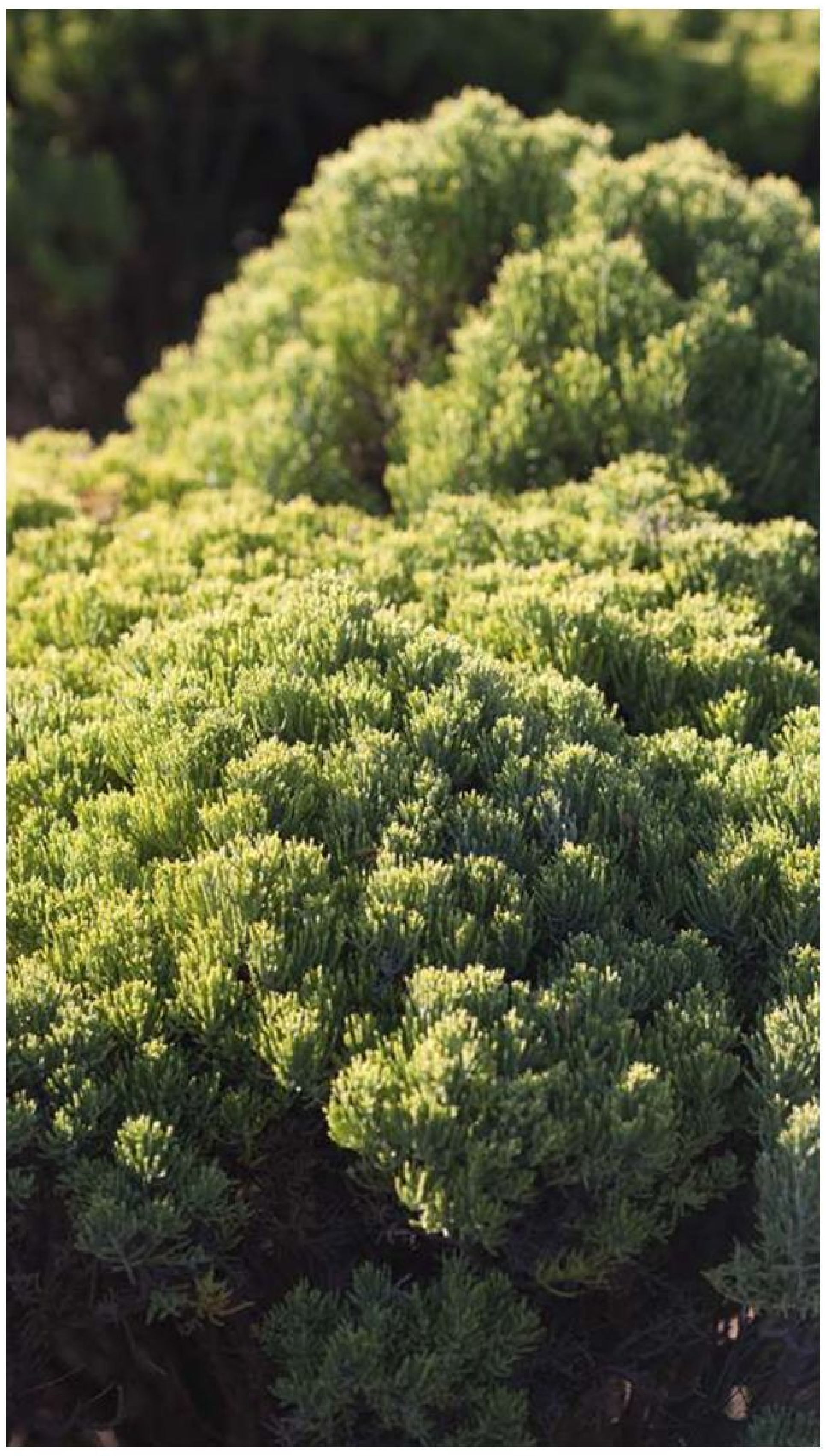
Fleeting in flower, this lovely greenish-yellow fritillary resembles a crown imperial in miniature with a top-knot of slender green leaves and foliage that spirals around the flowering stem below the clustered flowerhead. It is found in rocky places with dry summers but can withstand cold winters, especially if covered by a layer of snow. I am able to grow it reliably in dappled shade or sun and have been surprised that it appears to be able to cope with moist winters on my heavy clay. The flowers are delicately scented to attract bumblebees.

Height 60cm.
Origin Iran and Turkmenistan.
Conditions Sun or dappled shade; soil should not be waterlogged.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.
Season April to May. **MC**

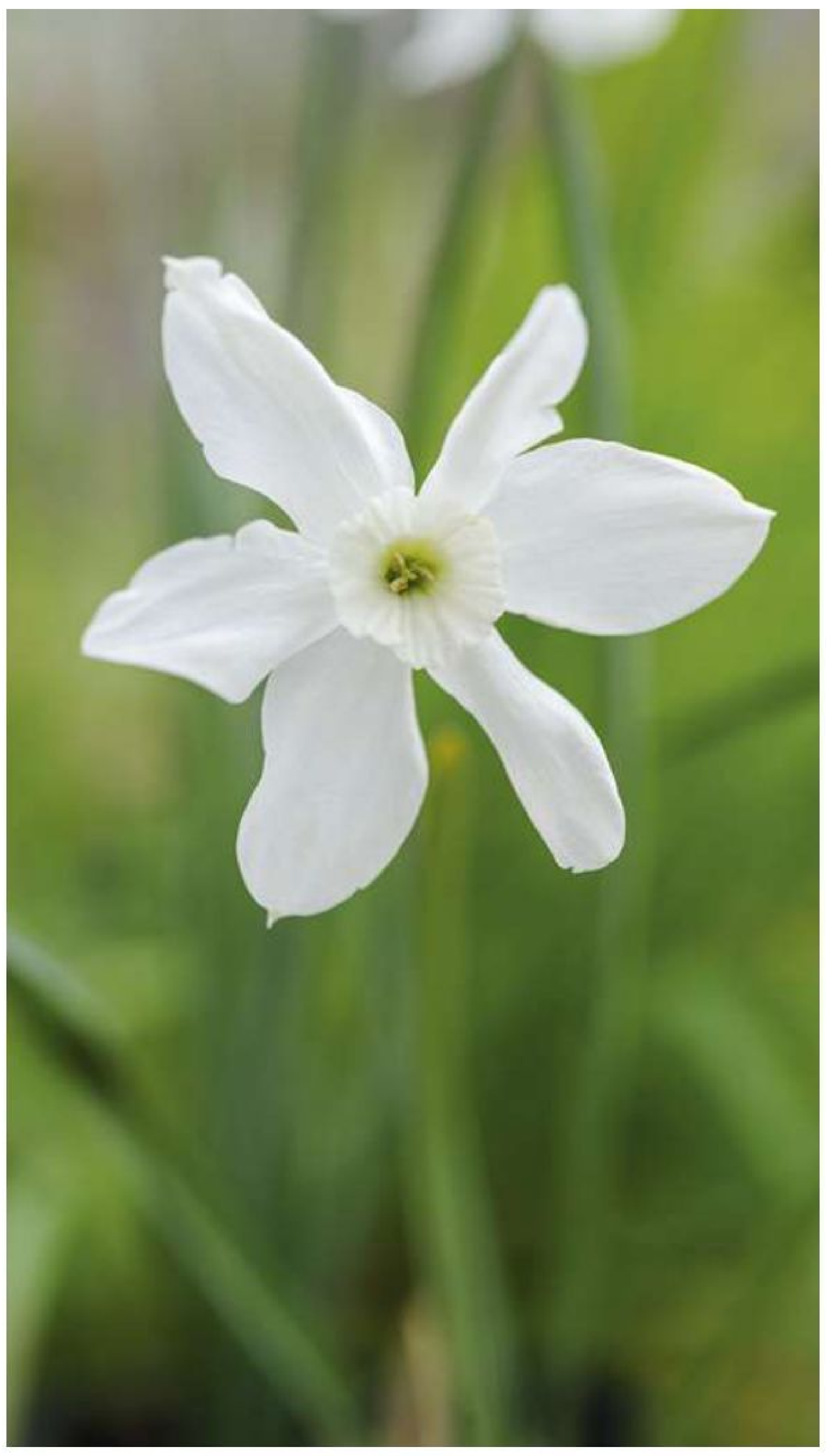
HEBE CUPRESSOIDES 'BOUGHTON DOME'

A small, compact, bun-like evergreen shrub resembling a well-furnished conifer with fine, tightly packed, samphire-like needles. The young growth is a lively, rich, pallid green and ripples across a fine and intricate undulating surface. Once described by Christopher Lloyd as 'a comfortable dumpling that sits like an old lady on the bus'. Useful as an all-year-round full stop in borders but its slow-growing nature means it needs breathing space to develop freely. Occasionally reverts back to the more freely growing *Hebe cupressoides*.

Height 1m.
Origin A sport of *Hebe cupressoides*.
Conditions Full sun in well-drained, moist soil.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.
Season All year round as foliage. **FG**



SHARON PEARSON



JASON INGRAM

NARCISSUS 'XIT'

This is a rather unprepossessing moniker for a singularly beautiful *Narcissus* hybrid in Division 3, the small-cupped daffodils. It has a glacial white corona surrounding a delicate, frilly, white cup with a subtle green eye and slender, almost grassy foliage. Raised by Alec Gray in the 1940s using *N. rupicola* subsp. *watieri* as a parent, this hybrid is larger in all its features while retaining the beauty of its north-African lineage. It is hardy but does not always reliably flower with me in my cold frost pocket.

Height 20cm.
Origin Hybrid of *Narcissus rupicola* subsp. *watieri*.
Conditions Well-drained but moisture-retentive soil.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.
Season March to April. **MC**

STEMS UNFURL TO REVEAL VIBRANT BLOOMS OF PINK, WHITE, RED OR PURPLE

ANEMONE X LIPSIENSIS

VIOLA CORSICA

The prince of violas. Blooming from March through October in shades of purple, it is a hardy perennial that self-seeds. I planted it in the half sun that I thought a viola might like in order to thrive. It survived there for a few years and then gently began to self-seed around the corner. It has now abandoned the light shade and has colonised 25m of my hottest, driest border. I should have guessed the conditions it would like best from its name. You would not think a Corsican plant could be so happy here. It is a river of purple for eight months, untouched by me.

Height 30cm.
Origin Mountains of Corsica.
Conditions Full sun or half-day sun.
Hardiness USDA 4a-9b.
Season Early spring through autumn. **DW**

JASON INGRAM

JASON INGRAM

CORYLOPSIS PAUCIFLORA

I confess that I have very few shrubs. They take up too much space and look dull for too much of the year. I make an exception for *Corylopsis pauciflora*. Dainty, pale, sulphur-yellow flowers dangle from leafless branches, exquisite when covered in rain. The scent reminds me of its cousin witch hazel, which won't grow for me. After the flowers, come small, neat leaves, flushed red when young then turning yellow in autumn. The spreading branches are attractive even in winter. An understated and elegant addition to any garden. AGM.

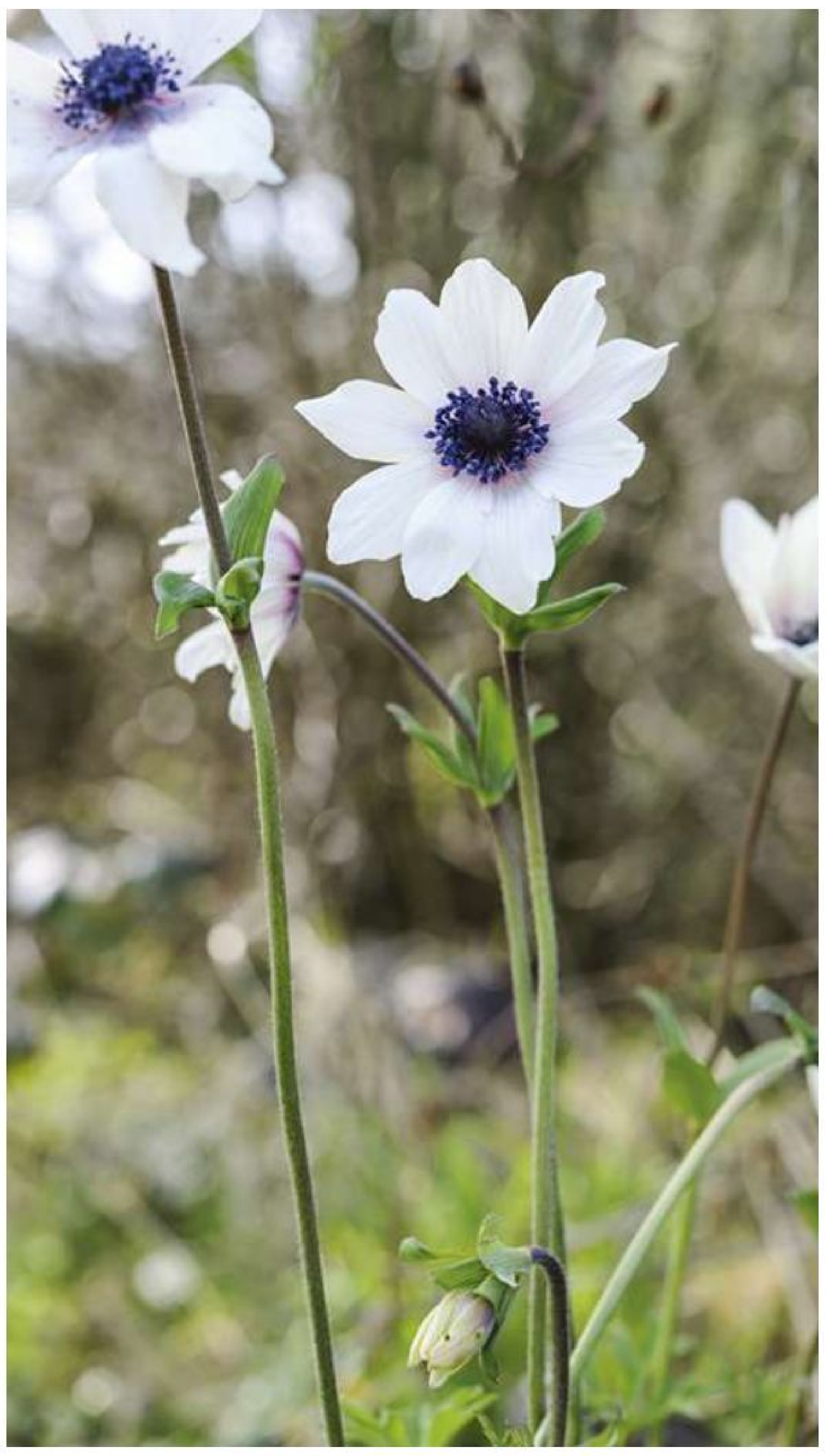
Height 1.2m.
Origin Japan and Taiwan.
Conditions Sun or light shade; prefers acid soil, but tolerates my alkaline clay.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.
Season March. **DW**

PULMONARIA 'BLUE ENSIGN'

Pulmonarias are work horses in the garden, thriving where other plants struggle. Cut the leaves hard back after flowering to get fresh, unblemished growth. Most pulmonarias have spotted leaves, some have silver, but this plain Jane has only plain green leaves.
It's when in flower that she becomes the belle of the ball – the brightest, most intense gentian blue with none of the muddy purple and pink offered by other pulmonarias. Unnoticed for most of the year, in March she steps forward to steal the show with her gorgeous blue gown. AGM.

Height 30cm.
Origin Europe.
Conditions Shade; not too dry.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.
Season March to April. **DW**

JASON INGRAM



JASON INGRAM

ANEMONE PAVONINA

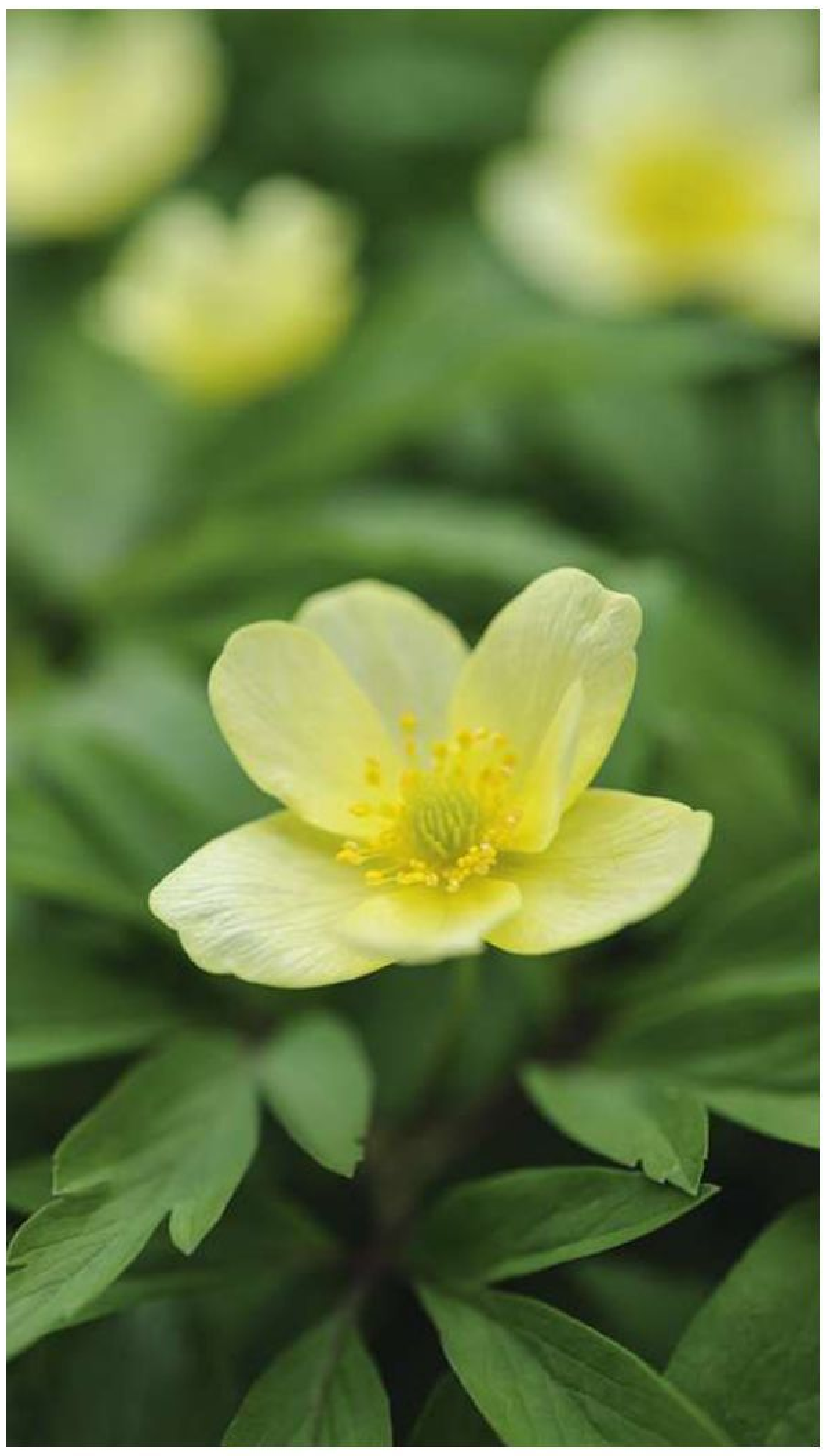
This tuberous plant produces an attractive rosette of dissected green foliage in early spring. Flowering stems unfurl from the centre to reveal large, vibrant blooms in shades of white, pink, red or purple with an occasional pale lemon. A central white – or occasionally, as here, pink – halo around a cluster of stamens completes the picture of this flamboyant flower, which has the appropriate colloquial name of peacock windflower. Stamens vary in colour through black, green and blue. If it is happy, this plant will naturalise to form large colonies.

Height 20cm.
Origin Greece, Turkey.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 8b-10b.
Season April to May. **MC**

ANEMONE X *LIPSIENSIS*

Looking just like pale-yellow wood anemones, a patch of *Anemone* x *lipsiensis* lights up the ground as if someone has spilled sunlight. The fine leaves are pretty enough to merit closer inspection. When the flowers fade, the leaves quickly follow suit and the whole plant disappears for another year. Like many woodland plants, it is summer dormant. The stick-like corms spread underground giving a slightly bigger patch of gold every year. If you can find the corms in late summer, you can divide and replant them to extend the colony.

Height 10-15cm.
Origin *Anemone ranunculoides* x *Anemone nemorosa*.
Conditions Shade; humus-rich soil.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.
Season March. **DW**



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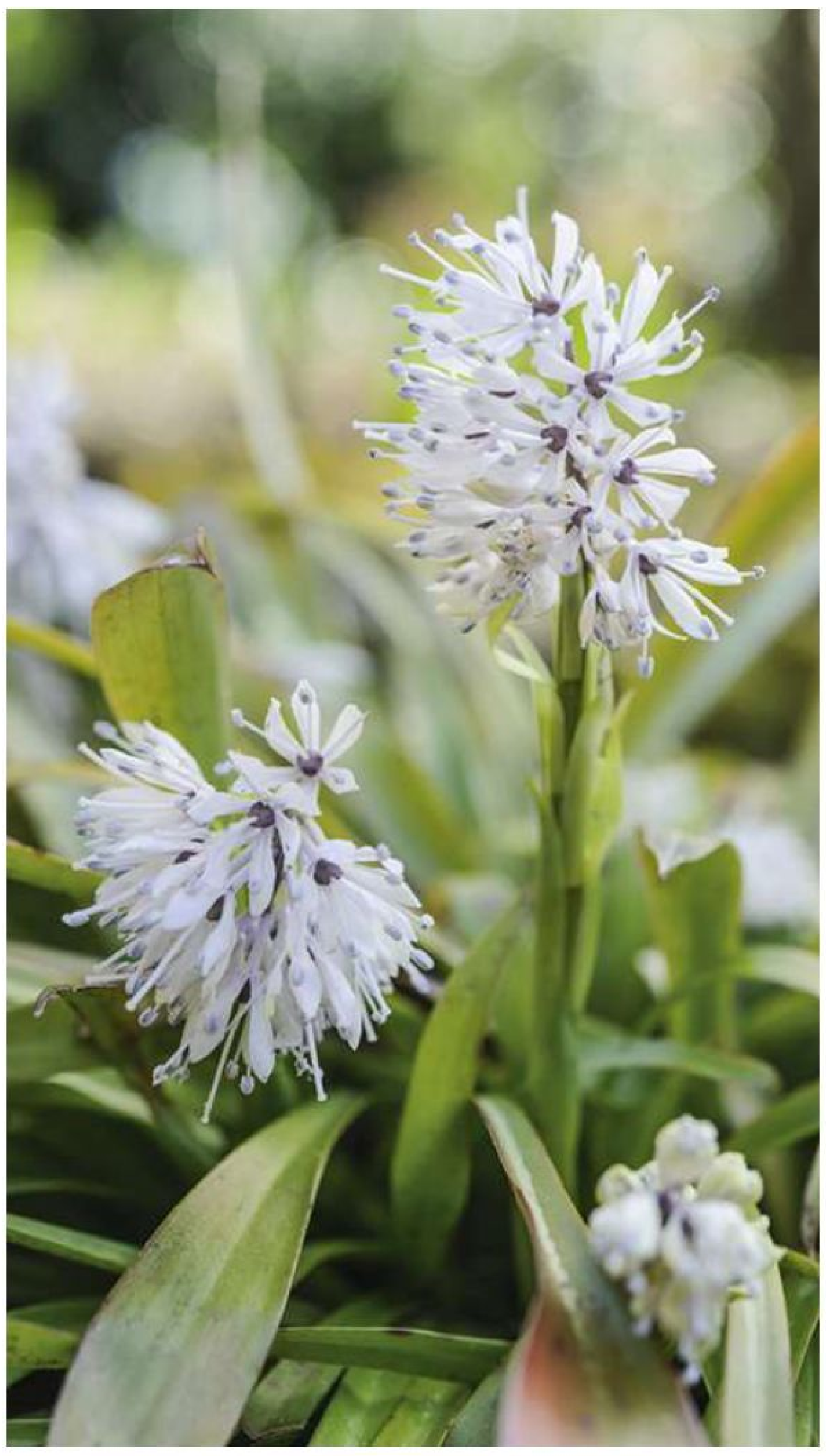


JASON INGRAM

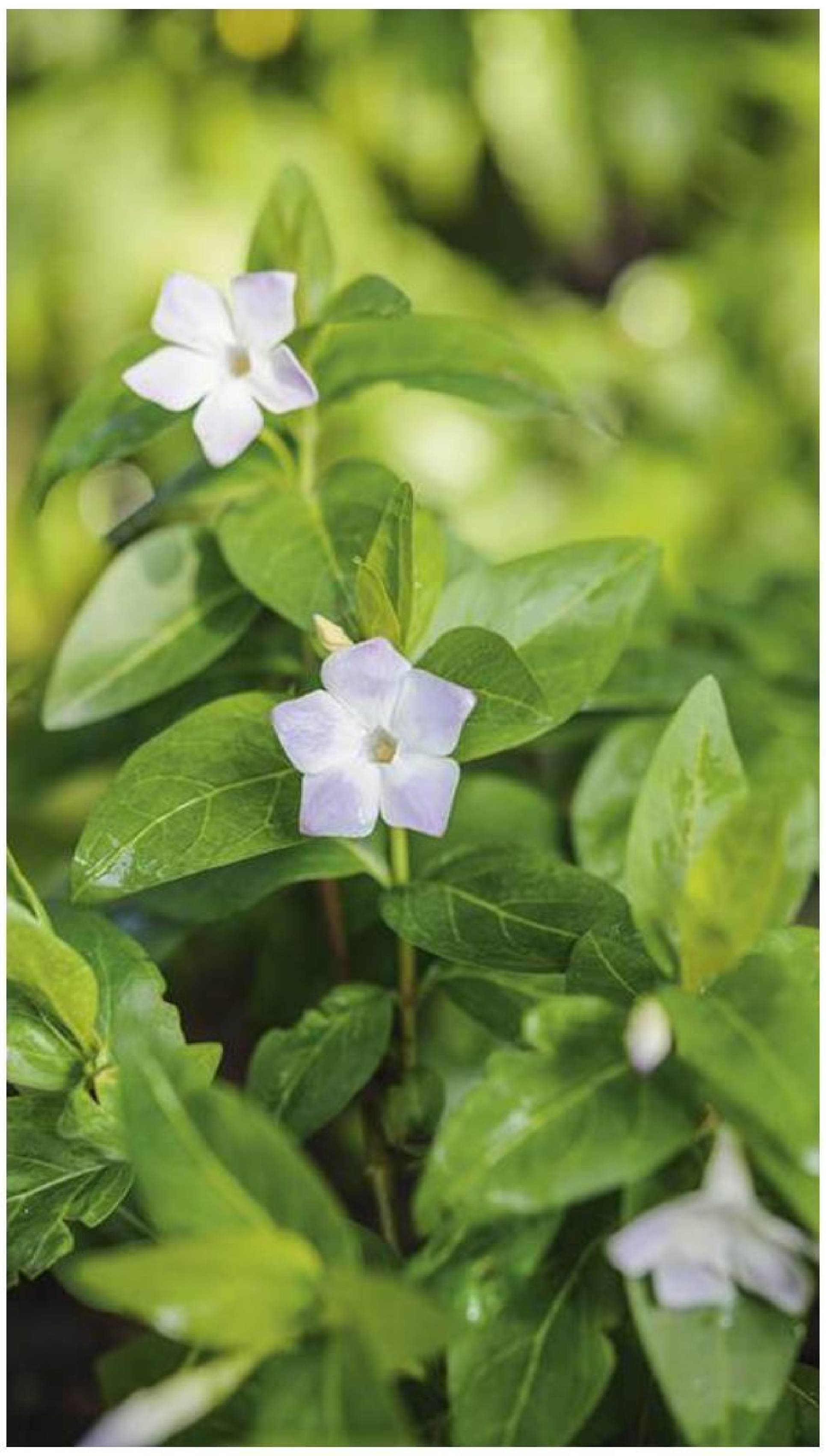
YPSILANDRA THIBETICA

The rather musically named *Ypsilandra thibetica* is an evergreen woodlander that is native to the eastern Himalayas. This herbaceous perennial forms neat clumps of lanceolate, basal leaves that produce small spikes of scented, spidery, white flowers (gradually ageing to pink). The smart foliage maintains its ornamental value for the summer and looks particularly good when paired with feathery ferns. *Ypsilandra thibetica* is still relatively rare in cultivation, despite the fact that it has been on the scene for about 20 years.

Height 30-40cm.
Origin Tibet, China and Taiwan.
Conditions. Moist, free-draining, humus-rich soil; some shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 7a-10b.
Season April to June. **MR**

DENSE, ZIG-ZAG, FORKING BRANCHES GIVE WAY TO MANY TINY BUDS

PRUNUS INCISA 'KOJO-NO-MAI'



JASON INGRAM

VINCA DIFFORMIS 'RUBY BAKER'

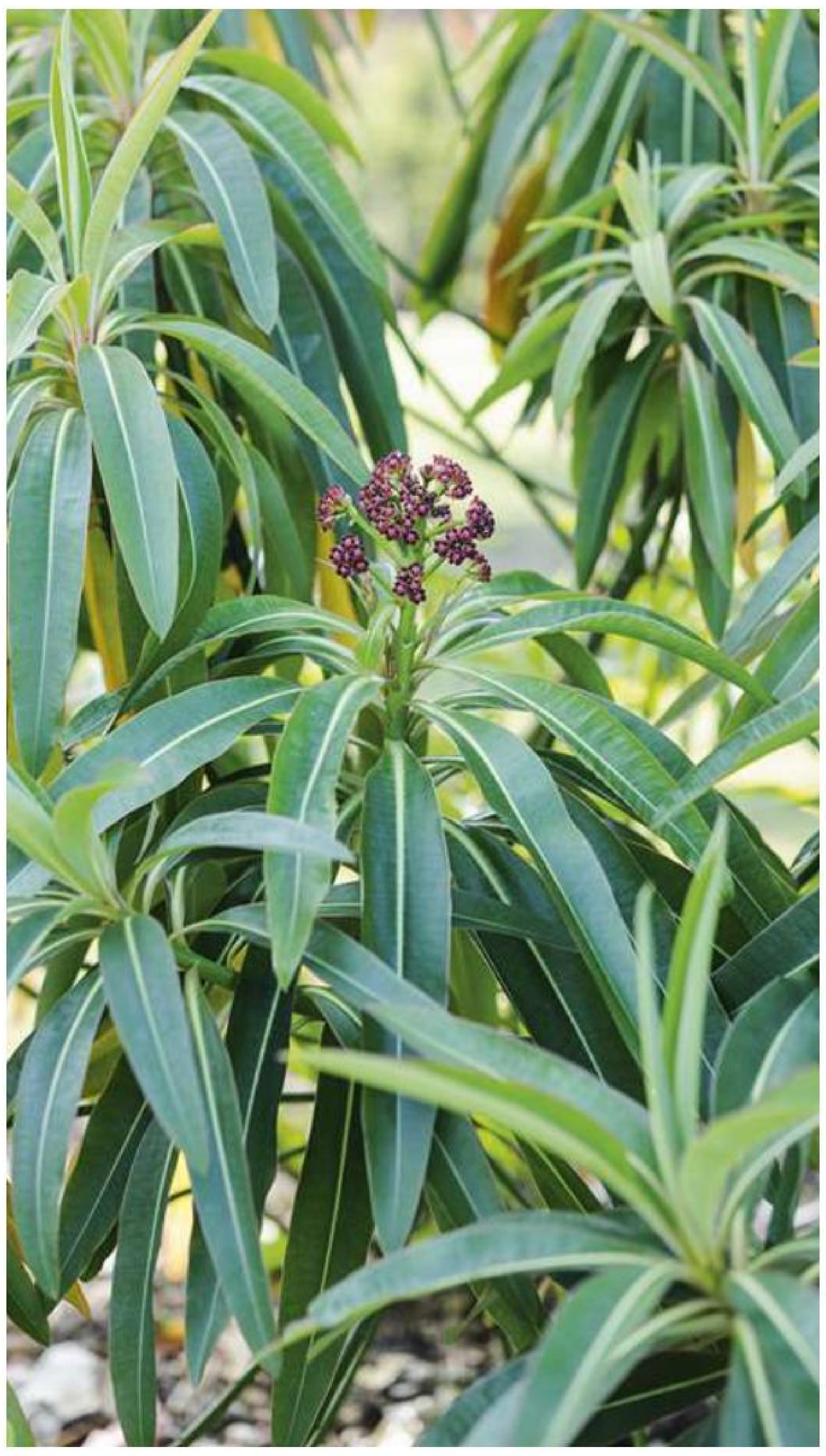
This useful and lovely periwinkle makes healthy groundcover that can cope with both shade and dry soil. A thick, lustrous carpet of dark-green foliage smothers weeds and produces lilac-white, propeller-shaped flowers through the darker winter months. Flowers are produced from young shoots. It resents cold northeasterlies and is happiest beneath a tree canopy. I have it planted in an evergreen woodland, where it flows through ferns and around trees and has been making steady progress over the past four years.

Height 40cm (slow, ongoing spread).
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Shelter and shade; can take drought.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season March to July. **MR**

EUPHORBIA MELLIFERA

The long, narrow, bright-green foliage of this shrubby, evergreen spurge makes quite a statement in the garden, although it will still sit comfortably within the flower borders. This handsome form was grown from seed collected in Madeira. Small, understated maroon flowers are produced in spring and smell of honey. Plants become leggy and untidy with age and should be replaced with young specimens. Seed-grown plants can reach up to two metres in three years. Needs a sheltered position. AGM.

Height 2.5m.
Origin Madeira and Canary Islands.
Conditions Sunny, sheltered site with free-draining soil.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 5a-8b.
Season Flowers May to June with year-round foliage. **MR**



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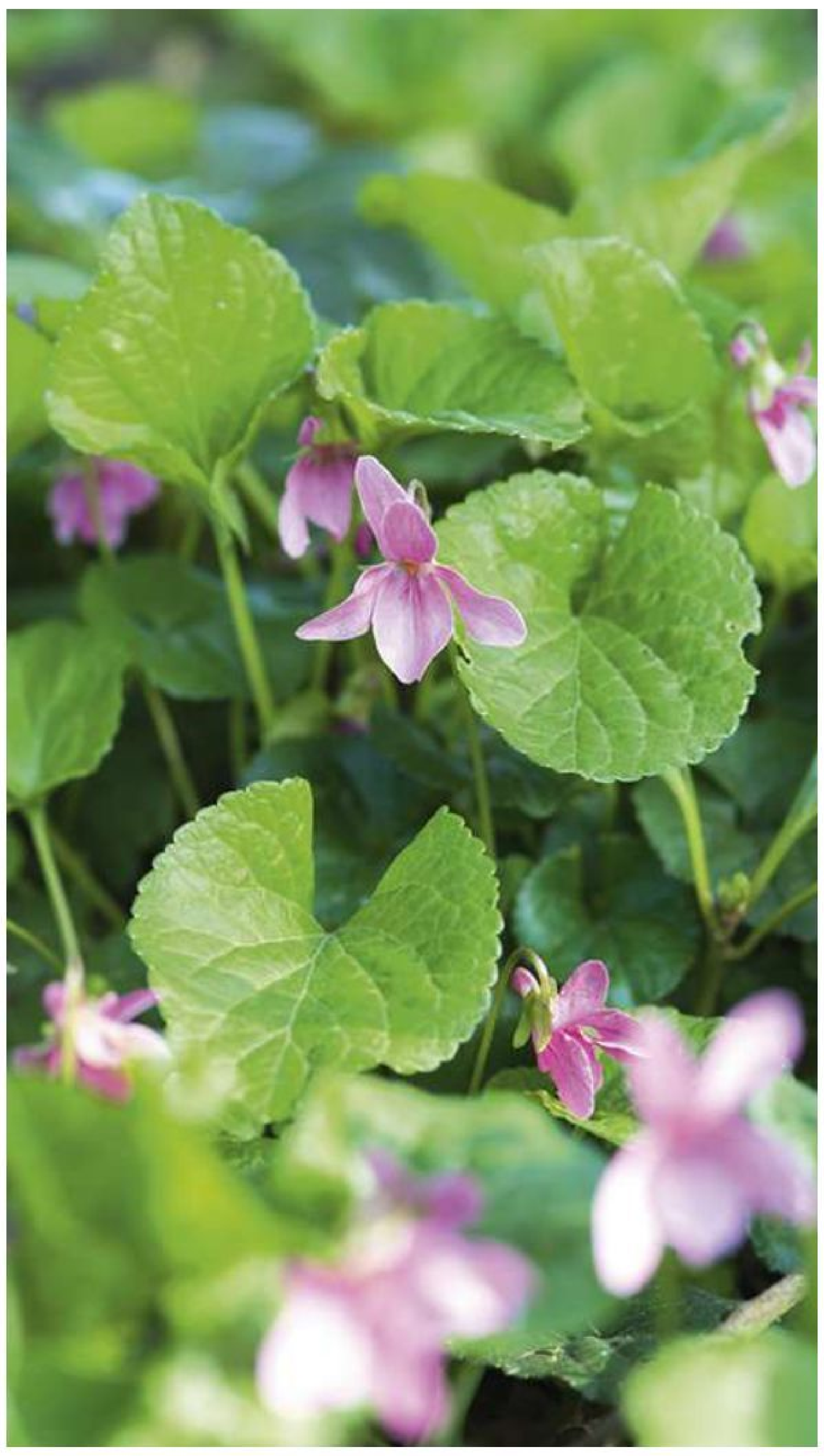


MAAYKE DE RIDDER

VIOLA 'COEUR D'ALSACE'

Recently, there has been a lot of renewed interest in some of the older cultivars of sweet violet, *Viola odorata*, which is wonderful. We have collected around 30 but many are similar to each other or not true to name. This one, 'Coeur d'Alsace', was registered by French nurseryman Armand Millet in 1916 and stands out for its clear-pink colour. On warm days, the scent is heavenly. The flower stems are a tad too short to be cut for a vase but in the garden it grows in places where nothing else will – at the south side of an old beech hedge, for example.

Height 15cm.
Origin Europe.
Conditions Almost any position and any soil.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.
Season March to April. **HK**

PRUNUS INCISA 'KOJO-NO-MAI'

This Fuji cherry is a fantastic little shrub for a winter garden. Its dense, zig-zag, forking branches give way to many tiny buds. In a mild winter, the first flowers will open in February, but more often it is March. Hepaticas work well beneath it, as do other little treasures, such as *Cyclamen coum* and *Eranthis*. I prefer it grafted as a small tree, which I once saw at an RHS show in early spring. This way it only takes up little space, yet gives plenty of interest at winter's end. AGM.

Height 2.5m.
Origin Japan.
Conditions Any soil that is not too poor; sun to dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 6a-9b. (Heavy frost can damage the flowers.)
Season March to April. **HK**

MAAYKE DE RIDDER

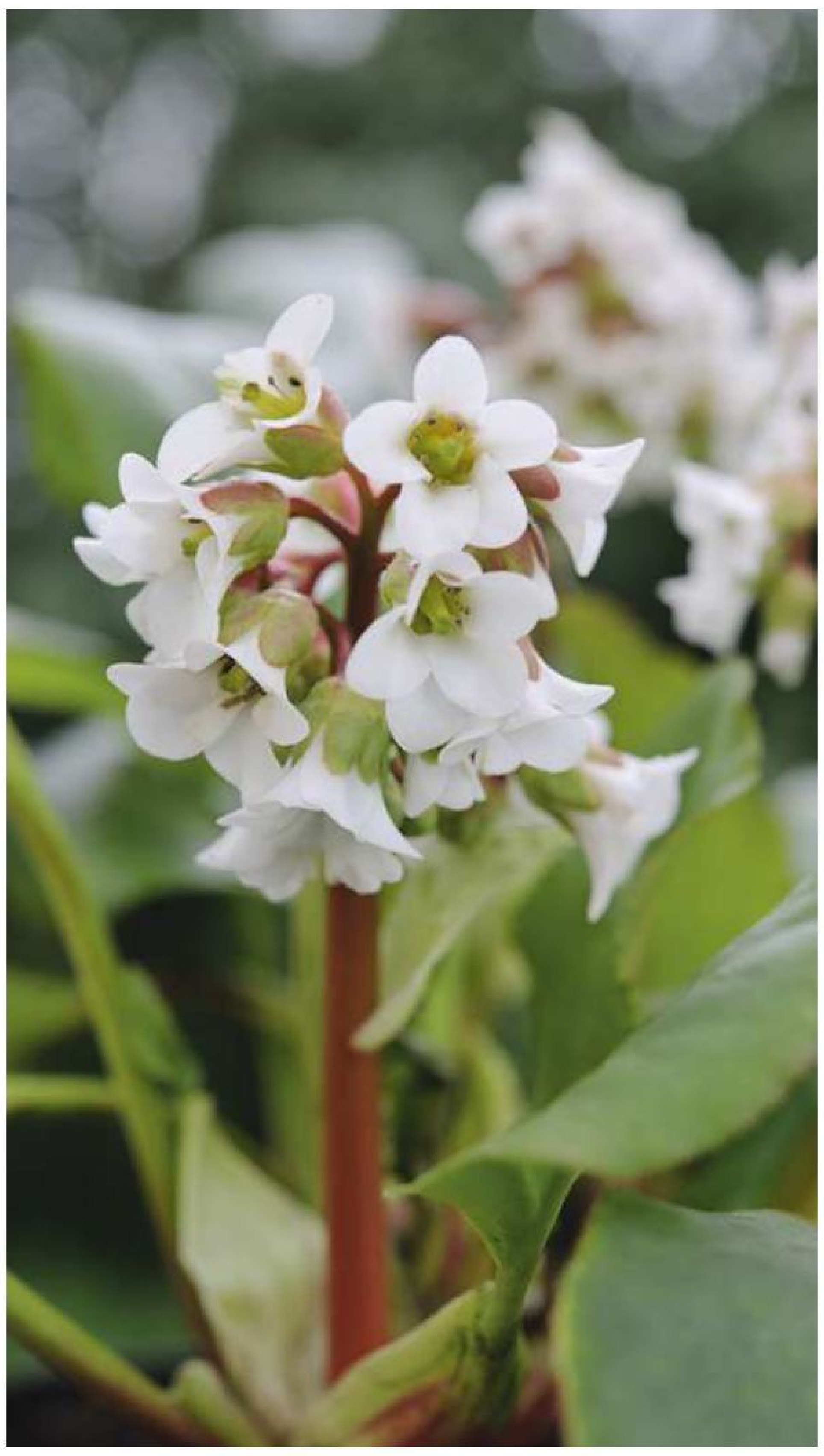
TULIP-SHAPED BUDS OF RICH, REDDISH PURPLE OPEN INTO GOBLET-SHAPED FLOWERS

MAGNOLIA 'GALAXY'

BERGENIA 'BRESSINGHAM WHITE'

A robust growth habit and tolerance of relatively poor soil have often pushed bergenias towards the insalubrious category of 'amenity landscape material'. This is unfortunate, when so much marks them out for recognition. Norfolk nursery Blooms of Bressingham clearly agreed, and bred a range of bergenias with good flower and foliage features. This one has creamy white flowers, each in a waxy pink calyx. The evergreen foliage stays neater than most, though trimming old leaves in February makes way for a clean break in spring. AGM.

Height 30cm.
Origin Species central and eastern Asia.
Conditions Most garden loams; leaf mulch in spring encourages new foliage.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.
Season February to March. **CM**



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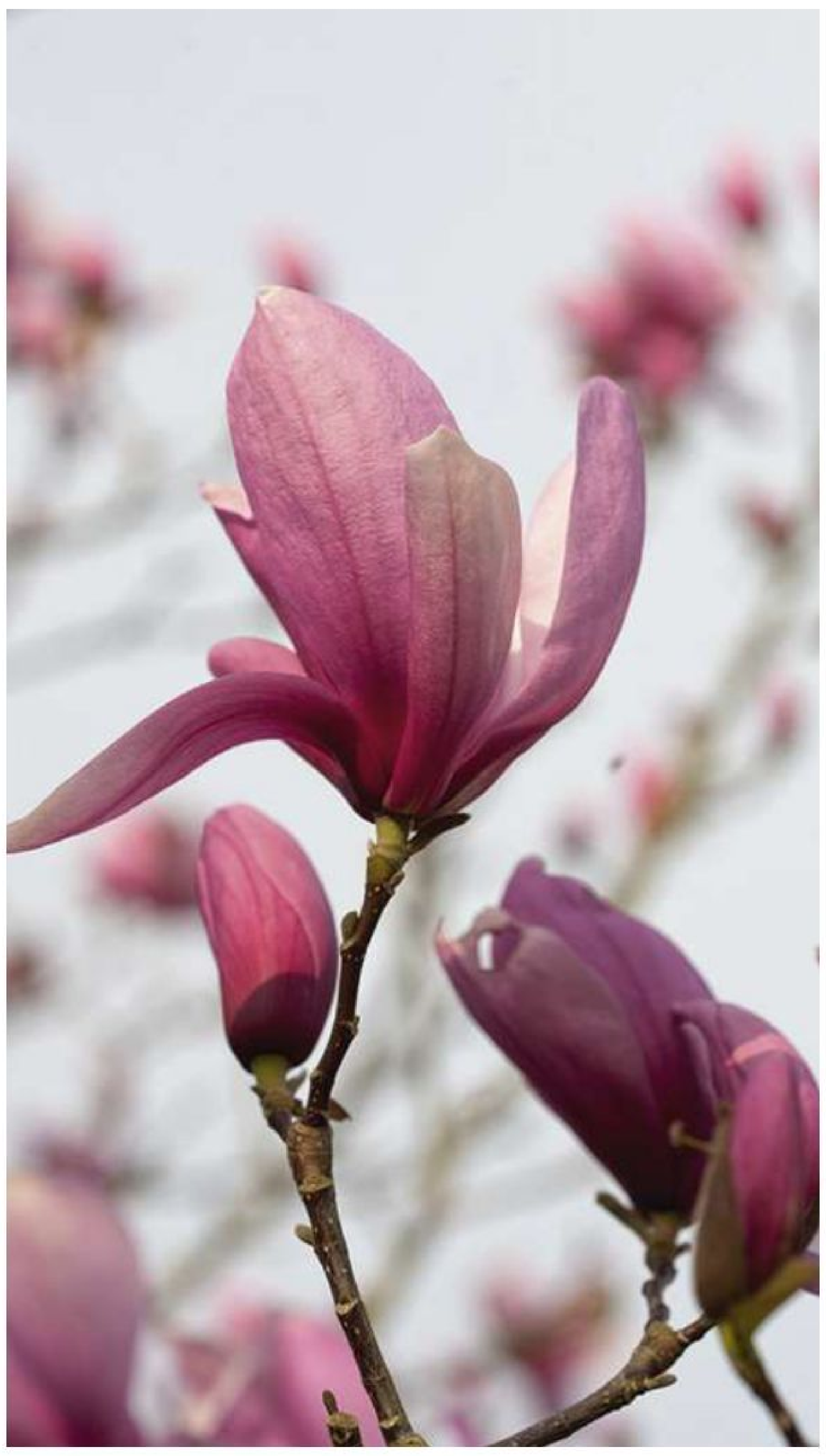


SHARON PEARSON

MAGNOLIA 'GALAXY'

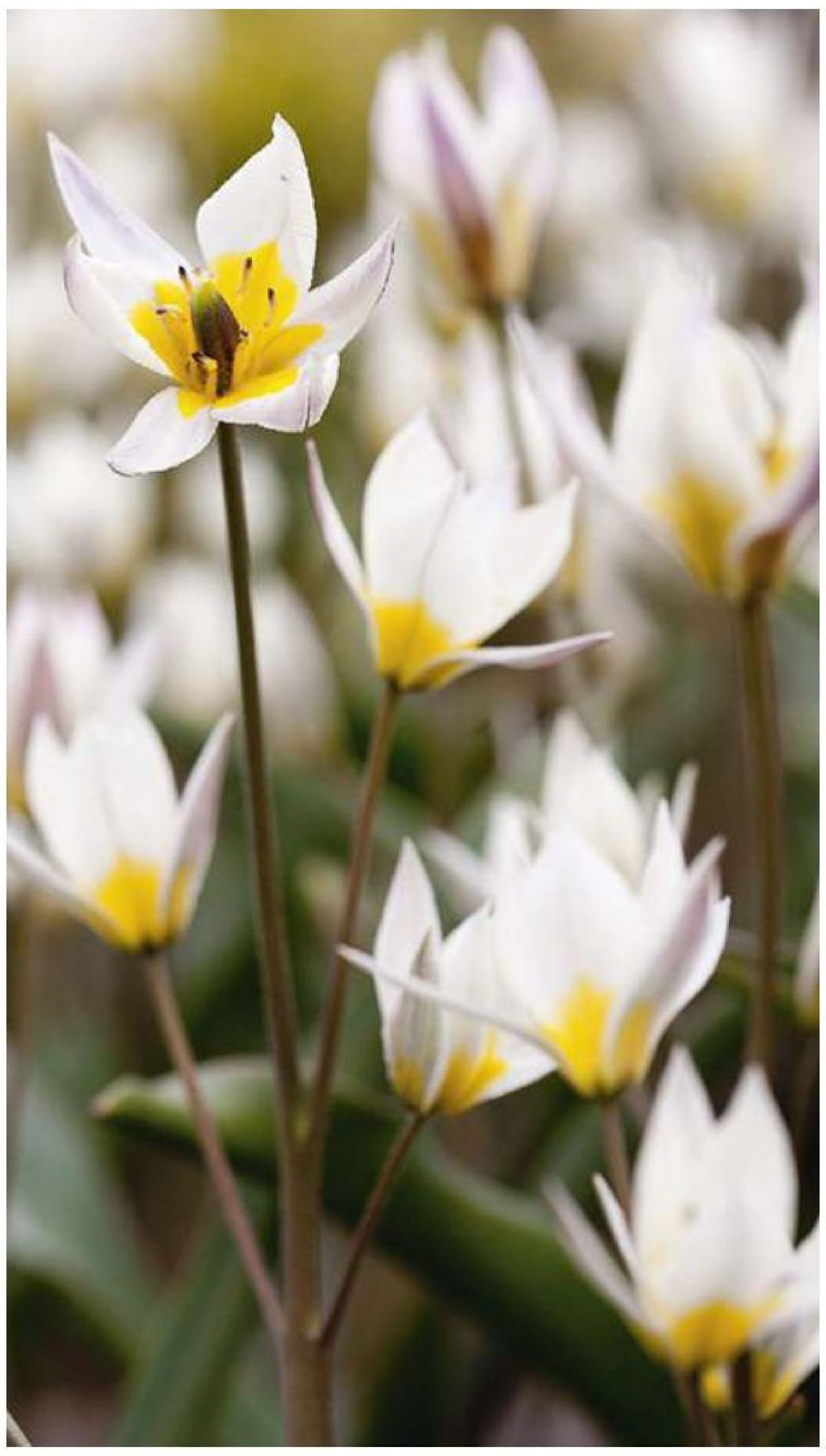
Tulip-shaped buds of rich, reddish purple open into fat goblet-shaped flowers revealing a white and pale-pink inside, highlighted by a protruding, prehistoric cone of brown carpels and pink stamens. The flowers arrive before the leaves on this stark, grey-barked, single-stemmed, low-hung tree. The shape becomes wider and more conical as its arching branches droop with age. The display is a sumptuous spectacle. The large oval leaves turn muddied yellow in autumn. AGM.

Height 8-10m.
Origin Bred in United States National Arboretum, Washington DC, in 1963.
Conditions Sun or light shade in a sheltered position in moist, humus-rich soil. Avoid chalk.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season March into April. **FG**

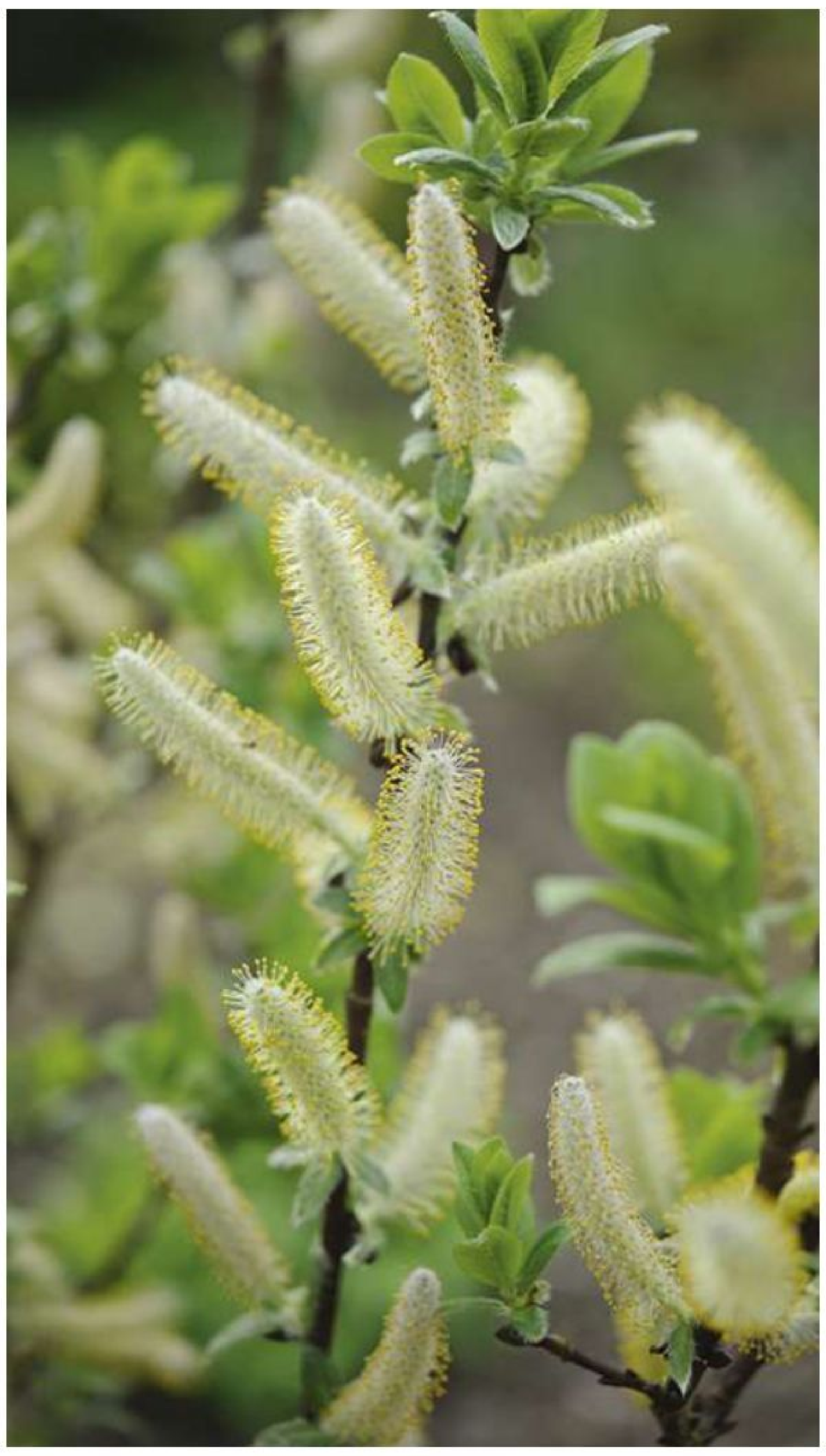
TULIPA TURKESTANICA

A profuse, free-flowering, multi-headed tulip, standing 20cm tall with delicately fragrant, creamy-white starry flowers, carried on several lazily arranged stems. The flowers are made up of six pointed petals, each of which has a broad yellow blotch at its base. These collectively create a vivid sunny centre as the blooms splay open on a warm day. The outsides of the flowers and the tips of the thin, elegant stems are washed in shades of grey-green. Swollen, club-shaped, streaked seedheads follow. The dried bulbs are beautiful too, resembling small shallots wrapped in brick-red sheaths. AGM.

Height 20cm.
Origin Central Asia.
Conditions Sunny. Well-drained soil.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 3a-9b.
Season February to April. **FG**



SHARON PEARSON



JASON INGRAM

SALIX HASTATA ‘WEHRHAHNII’

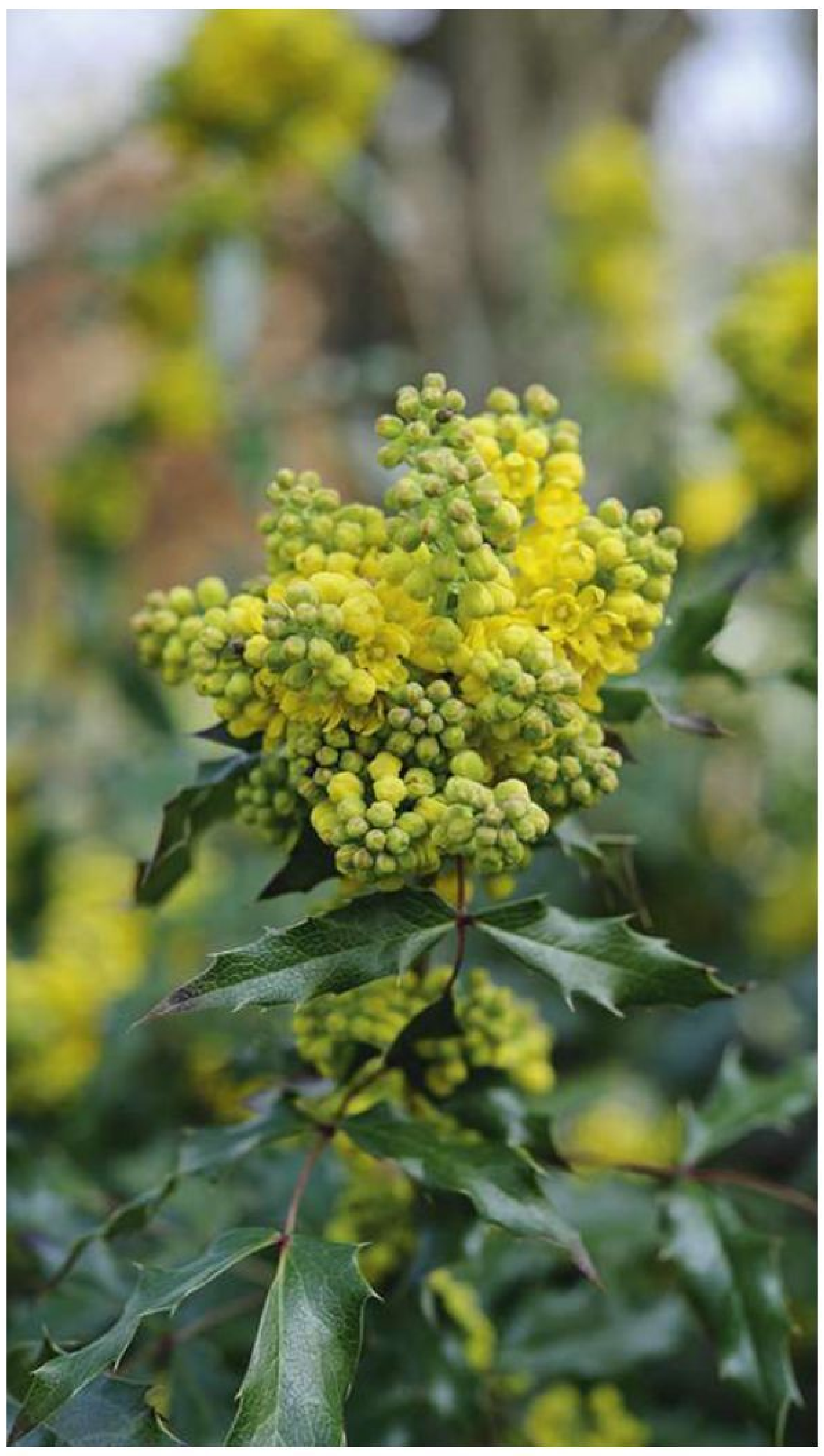
Some plants bring a welcome tactile appeal to the garden border, and this is one. A slow-growing willow with even, spreading habit, it achieves only modest proportions even when fully grown and is therefore suitable for gardens great and small. In spring, stout, dark twigs are generously covered with silken, silvery male buds. Each one expands into an explosion of golden catkins, supported by fresh green foliage. At its flowering peak, it is hard to resist a smoothing touch as you pass. AGM.

Height 1m.
Origin Northern Europe.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil in sun or light shade.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Season Spectacular catkins in April, leaf cover thereafter. **CM**

MAHONIA AQUIFOLIUM ‘SMARAGD’

A plant you are likely to experience through the nose before the eyes. Antiseptic notes of *Mahonia* perfume carry on the air, and rounding a corner in the garden I am confronted by a rounded bush laden with unfolding blossoms. When other mahonias perished in the freezing winter of 2010, this one stood unflinching through -18°C to emerge without a blemish. I prefer blossoms in semi-mature state when they display a tonal range from primrose yellow to glorious gold across buds and exploded blooms on each floret. A magnet for early bees.

Height 1.3m.
Origin Western North America.
Conditions Most soils, including clay.
Hardiness USDA 5a-8b.
Season March to April. **CM**



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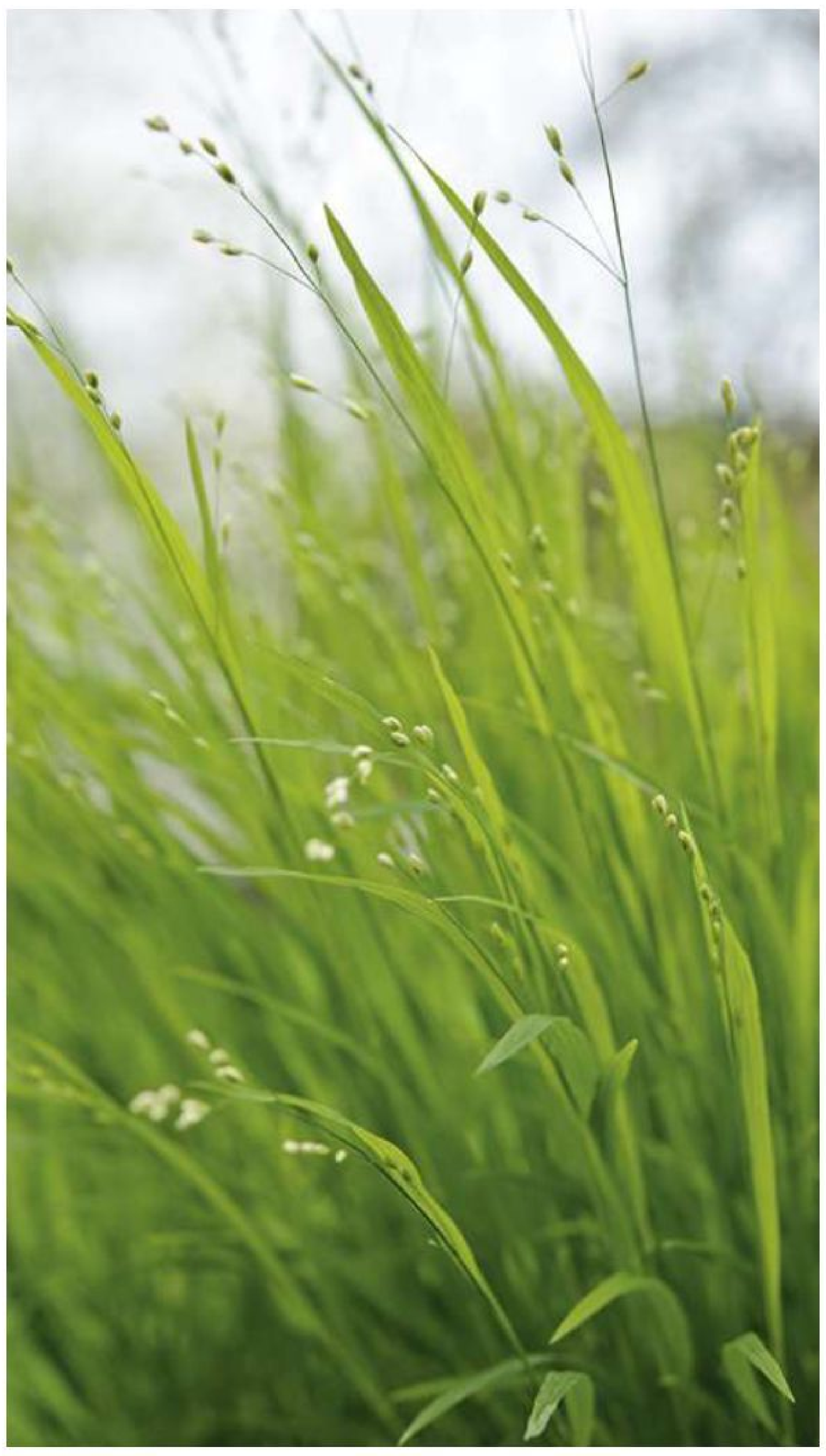


JASON INGRAM

MELICA ALTISSIMA ‘ALBA’

Although relatively simple and seemingly unglamorous in its own right, this plant has the capacity to bring alive a range of informal border compositions. There are tactile and kinetic elements to its charm. Flowers like grains of white rice are suspended on slender, wiry stems and tremble in the slightest breeze. I have threaded these plants through countless other woodland flowerers to impart transparency and texture.

Height 60cm.
Origin Found in alkaline woodlands across Europe to Russia.
Conditions Prefers well-drained, alkaline to neutral soil in a shady aspect. Drought tolerant but resents excessive winter wet.
Hardiness USDA 5a-9b.
Season April to June. **CM**

JASON INGRAM

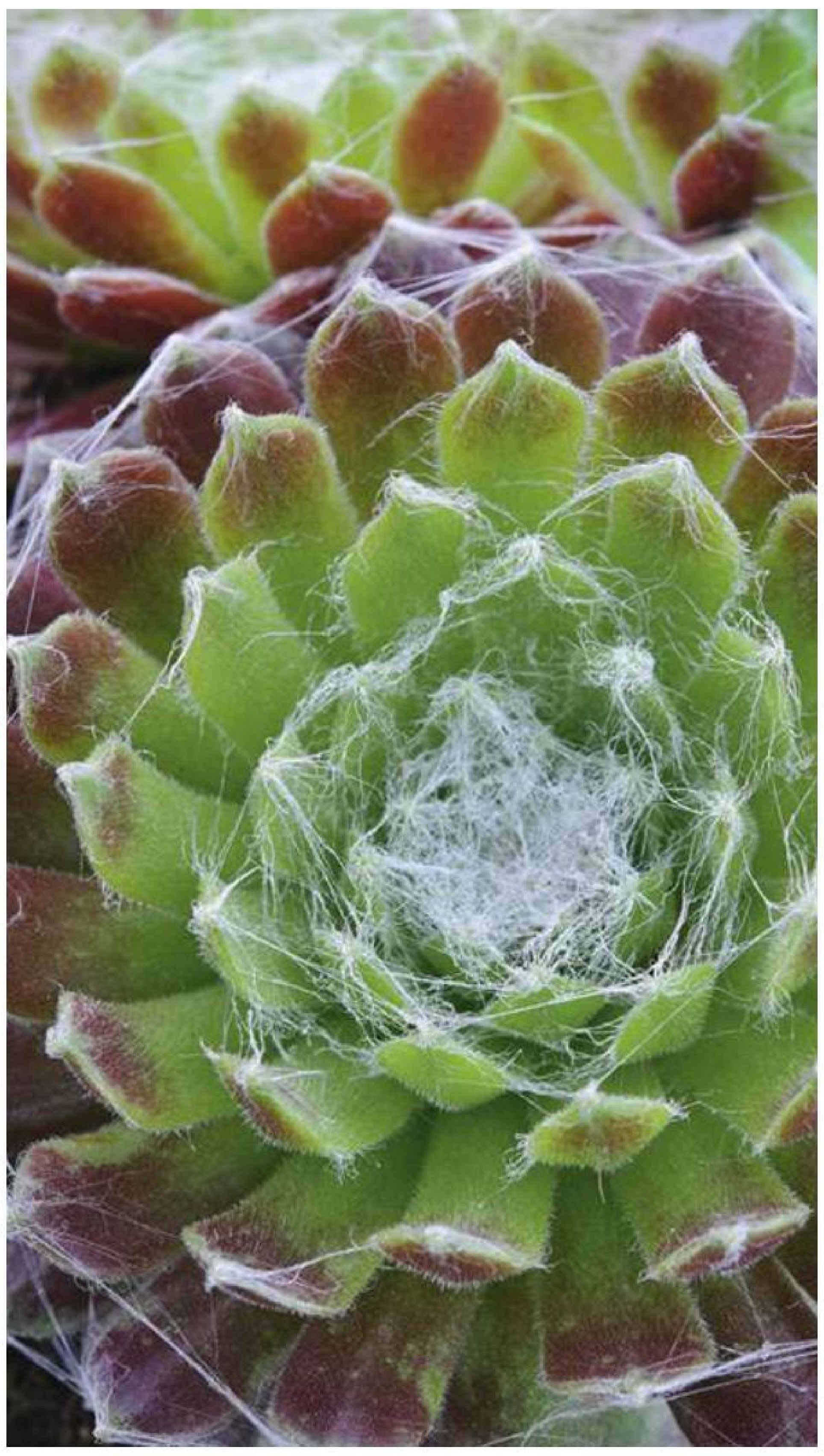
EUPHORBIA X *MARTINI* 'TINY TIM'

This robust, shade-tolerant evergreen adds structure to winter plantings. Juvenile spring foliage emerges with attractive reddish tones, balancing the characteristic lime-green inflorescence of *Euphorbia* flowers. A cross between *E. characias* and *E. amygdaloides*, the plant is adaptable to a wide range of conditions, and the compact habit obviates any need for staking.

Height 60cm.
Origin A hybrid of two Eurasian species.
Conditions Humus-rich soil in sun or shade.
Hardiness USDA 6a-9b.
Season March to May. **CM**

JUVENILE FOLIAGE WITH REDDISH TONES BALANCES LIME-GREEN INFLORESCENCES

EUPHORBIA X *MARTINI* ‘TINY TIM’



JASON INGRAM

SEMPERVIVUM ARACHNOIDEUM

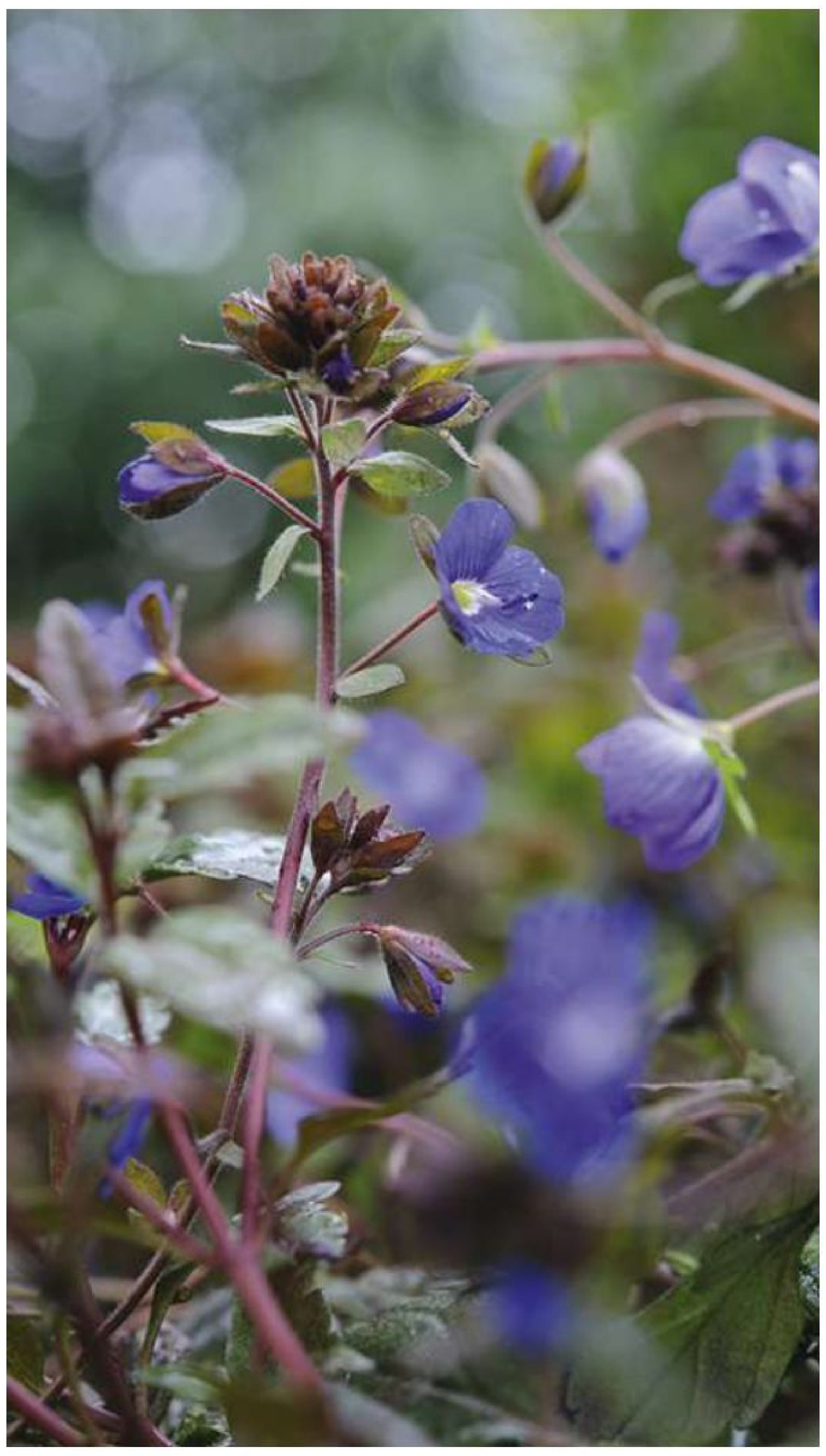
It may be too early for big floral displays in March, but a small planting detail on the garden table reminds us of nature’s resilience. These perfect rosettes nestle in a bowl, forming a spiky tapestry covered with a spider’s web of fine hairs. Any off-shoots can be planted in a fresh container for next season. In some places sempervivums are grown on roofs. In ancient times, this was thought to guard against thunderbolts and sorcery, and ensure the occupants’ prosperity. AGM.

Height 12cm.
Origin Alps, Pyrenees, Apennines and Carpathian Mountains, Mediterranean islands.
Conditions Free-draining, sandy soil.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.
Season Evergreen foliage; flowers in April. **CM**

VERONICA UMBROSA ‘GEORGIA BLUE’

When other plants are showing only terminal tips above soil, this *Veronica* has already spread a bronzy skirt of foliage across the ground. I value this one as a foil for more structured planting, and an early detail for rockery or scree plantings. Where I have them in a planter on the north side of the house, they encircle the giant buds of *Hosta* ‘Sum and Substance’. Their trailing stems quickly extend to form a floral curtain that endures for some three weeks, by which time the *Hosta* has unfurled. AGM.

Height 15cm.
Origin Caucasus, Turkey and Ukraine; Roy Lancaster introduced this cultivar.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun or light shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.
Season March to April. **CM**



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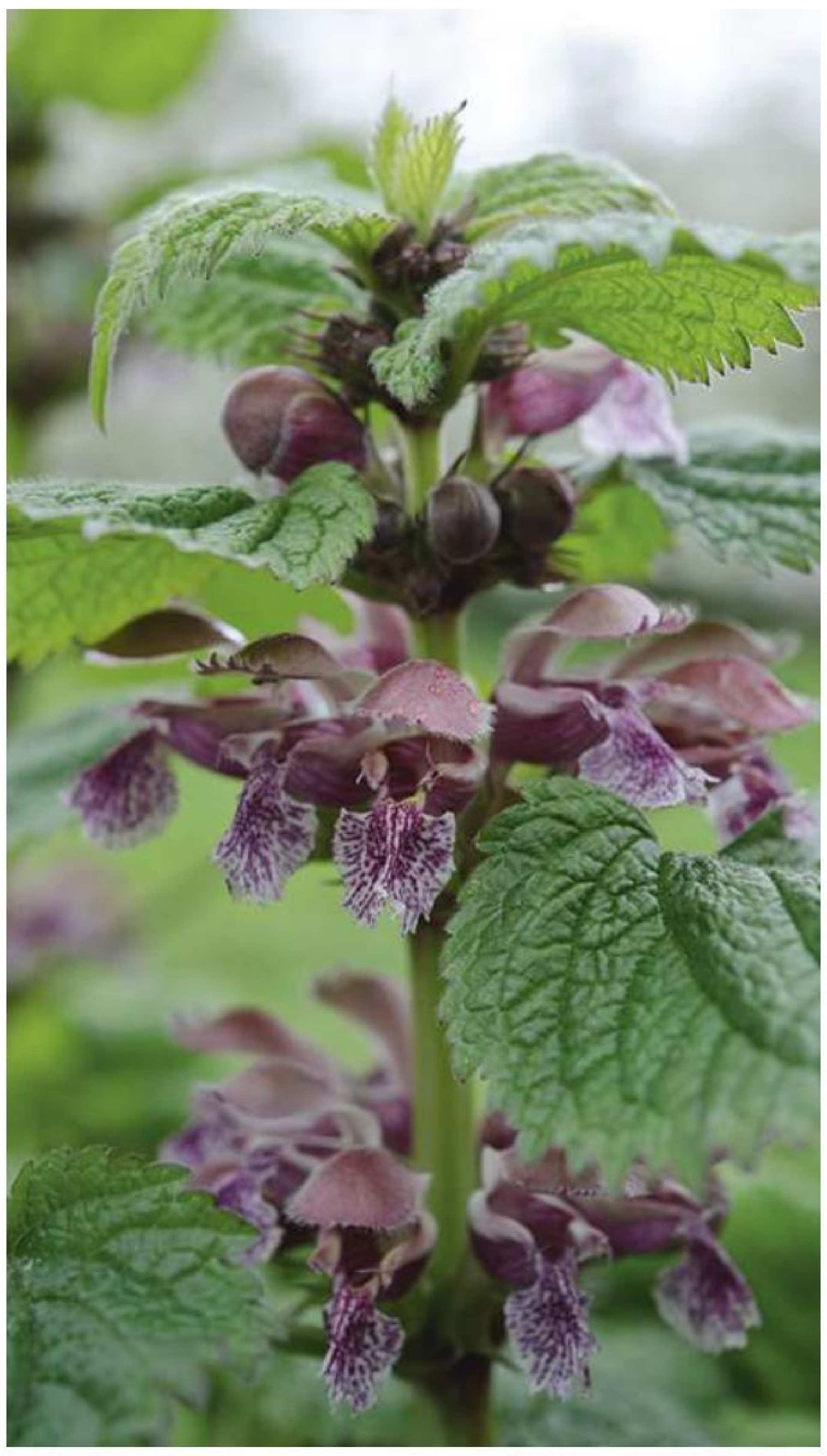


JASON INGRAM

LAMIUM ORVALA

It is the scale of this plant that makes me smile. We are all familiar with the humble dead nettle of English ditches and verges, but this giant form has aspirations of grandeur. To further its case, the flowers are not white but an elegant coppery pink with intricate burgundy veining. If it were an orchid, we would be marking its card high for presentation. The classic square-section lamium stem ensures no staking is required. It is sought out by bees from miles around for its source of early pollen.

Height 60cm.
Origin Native to scrubs and maquis in central eastern Europe.
Conditions Most soils in partial to full shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 7a-11.
Season April-May. **CM**

COPPER-RED BUDS OPEN INTO SEMI-DOUBLE ROWS OF PETALS IN DEEP COPPERY PINK

GEUM 'BELL BANK'

ERYSIMUM CHEIRI 'BLOOD RED'

This deliciously scented wallflower needs little qualification to justify inclusion. Strictly speaking a short-lived sub shrub, in the UK gardeners tend to grow them as hardy biennials, bedding out in late autumn in readiness for the following spring. The fragrance is strongest after an April shower, when still air is gently warmed by sun. Velvet-textured, dark-red flowers make an exciting contrast with tulips. We use 'Blood Red' in formal planters on the terrace where they scramble through orange *Tulipa* 'Irene' or the redder *T.* 'Jan Reus'.

Height 50cm.
Origin Temperate zones of Europe.
Conditions Copes with a wide range of soils but prefers well-drained loam.
Hardiness USDA 8a-11.
Season Flowers March to April. **CM**

JASON INGRAM

JASON INGRAM

TULIPA ACUMINATA

From its name, this bizarrely shaped tulip appears to be a species and is known as the horned tulip but it is almost certainly a hybrid originating in Istanbul and exported to Europe some two centuries ago. Flower stems produce a single bloom with exceedingly elongated tepals with a base colour of yellow but infused and streaked with a fiery scarlet. In sunny weather the sharply pointed tepals twist and turn, giving a slightly awkward and ungainly appearance. A curiosity rather than a great beauty, requiring full sun and good drainage.

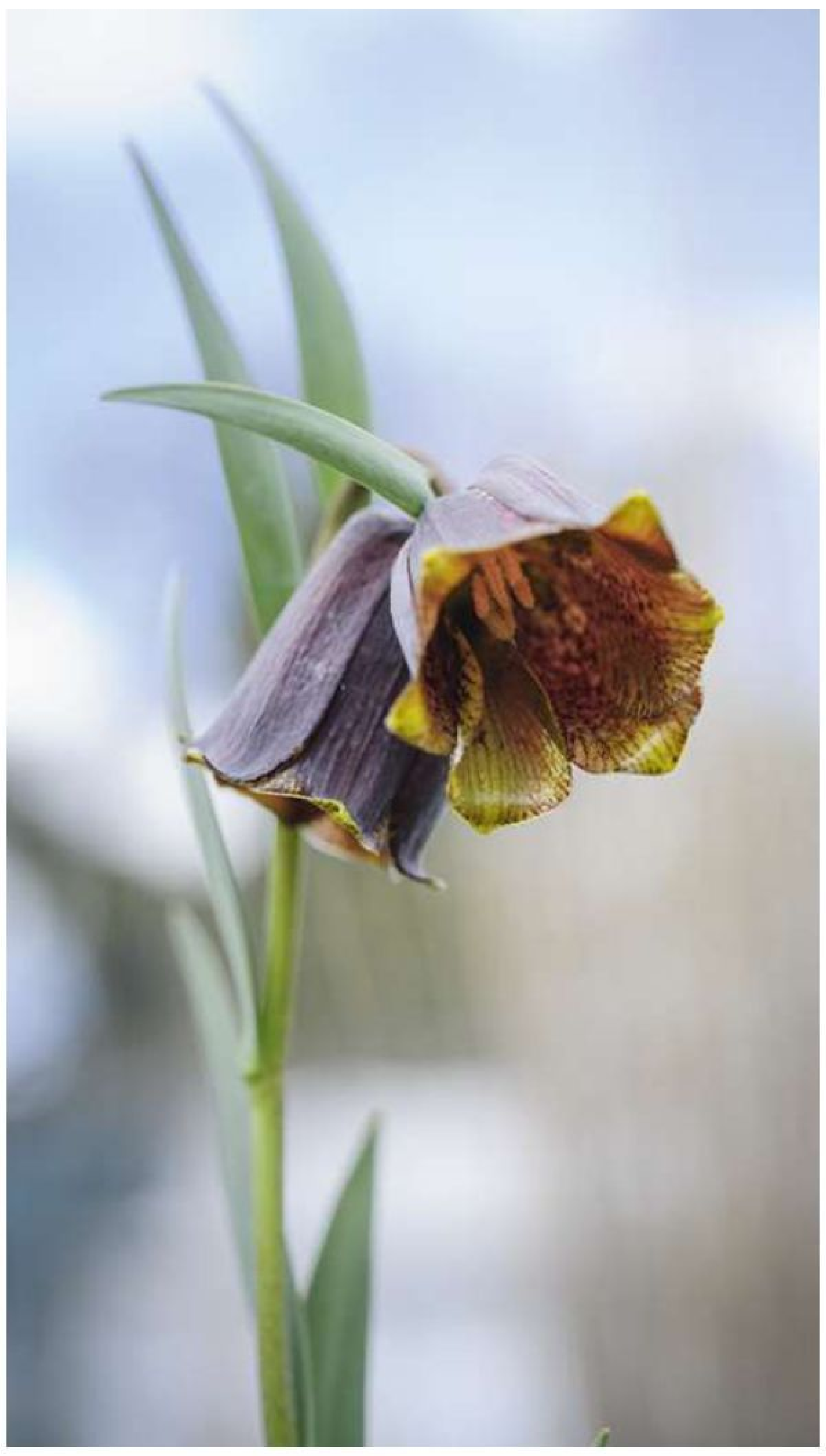
Height 20-40cm.
Origin Turkey.
Conditions Sharp drainage; sun and prolonged dry summer.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 3a-9b.
Season April to May. **MC**

GEUM 'BELL BANK'

A showy plant that almost disappeared. Stephen Rogers, of Dove Cottage in West Yorkshire, brought it back as an unnamed selection after the original raiser lost it. Now it has a name and is deservedly popular. It looks like a more colourful form of *Geum rivale* 'Leonard's Variety' but is much taller. From late April, dark, copper-red buds open into semi-double rows of petals in deep coppery pink. Over time, they fade to pale pink but the full show goes on for at least six weeks. Geums like heavy soil and on my sandy soil need dividing at least every three years.

Height 50cm.
Origin Europe.
Conditions Heavy, fertile soil in sun to partial shade, not too dry.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season April to June. **HK**

MAAYKE DE RIDDER



JASON INGRAM

FRITILLARIA PYRENAICA 'CEDRIC MORRIS'

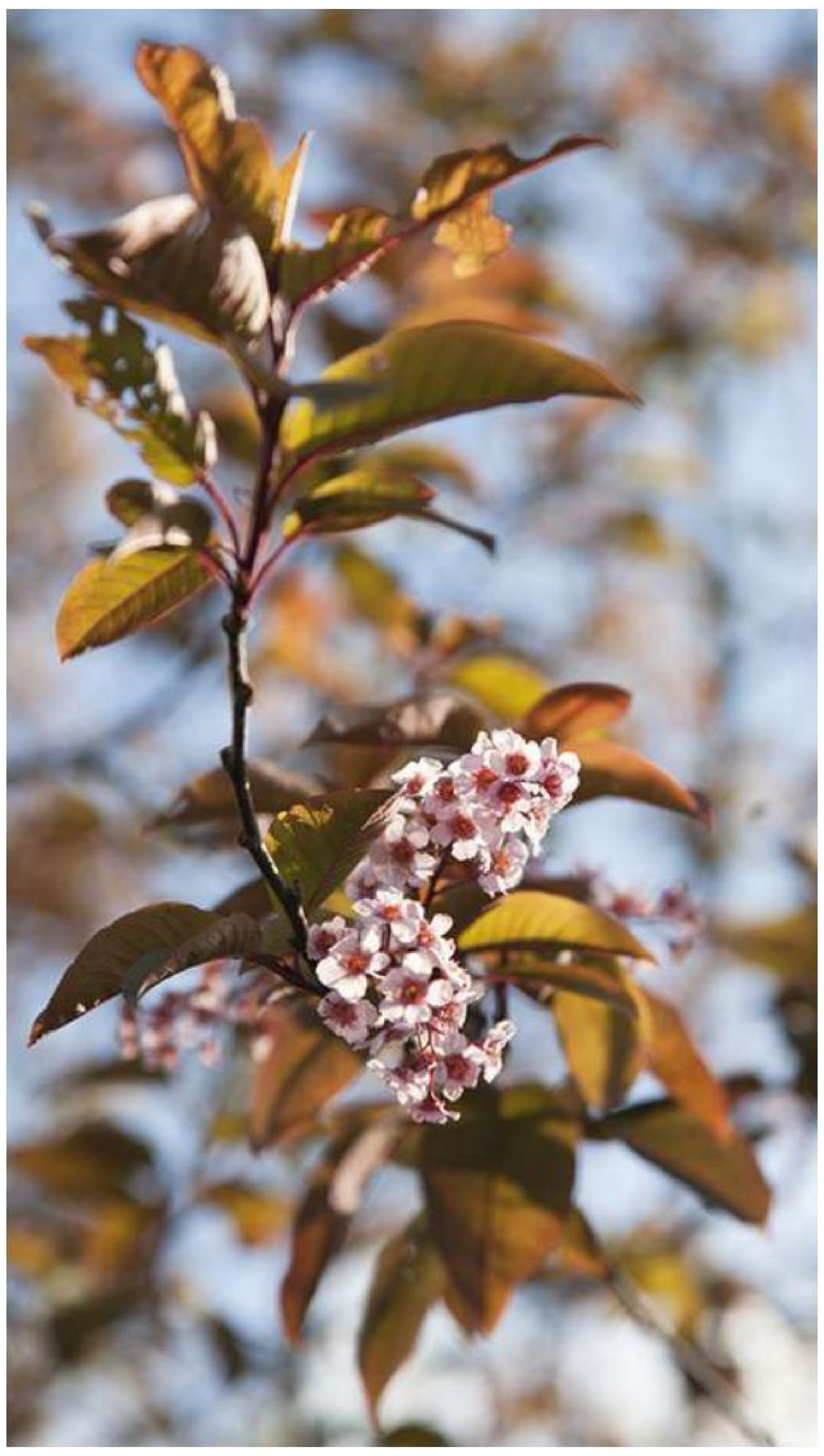
This handsome fritillary hails from alpine meadows flowering soon after snows melt. It grows well in dappled shade and in some places in full sun as long as it has moisture-retentive soil. Although the species is often variable in colour with a single flower per stem, this form almost always bears two dark flowers per stem. It is strongly tessellated on both the outside and within the flower, with strongly recurved petals and a base colour of yellow overlaid with purplish-brown.

Height 30-40cm.
Origin Southern France and northwestern Spain.
Conditions Well-drained, moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Season April to May. **MC**

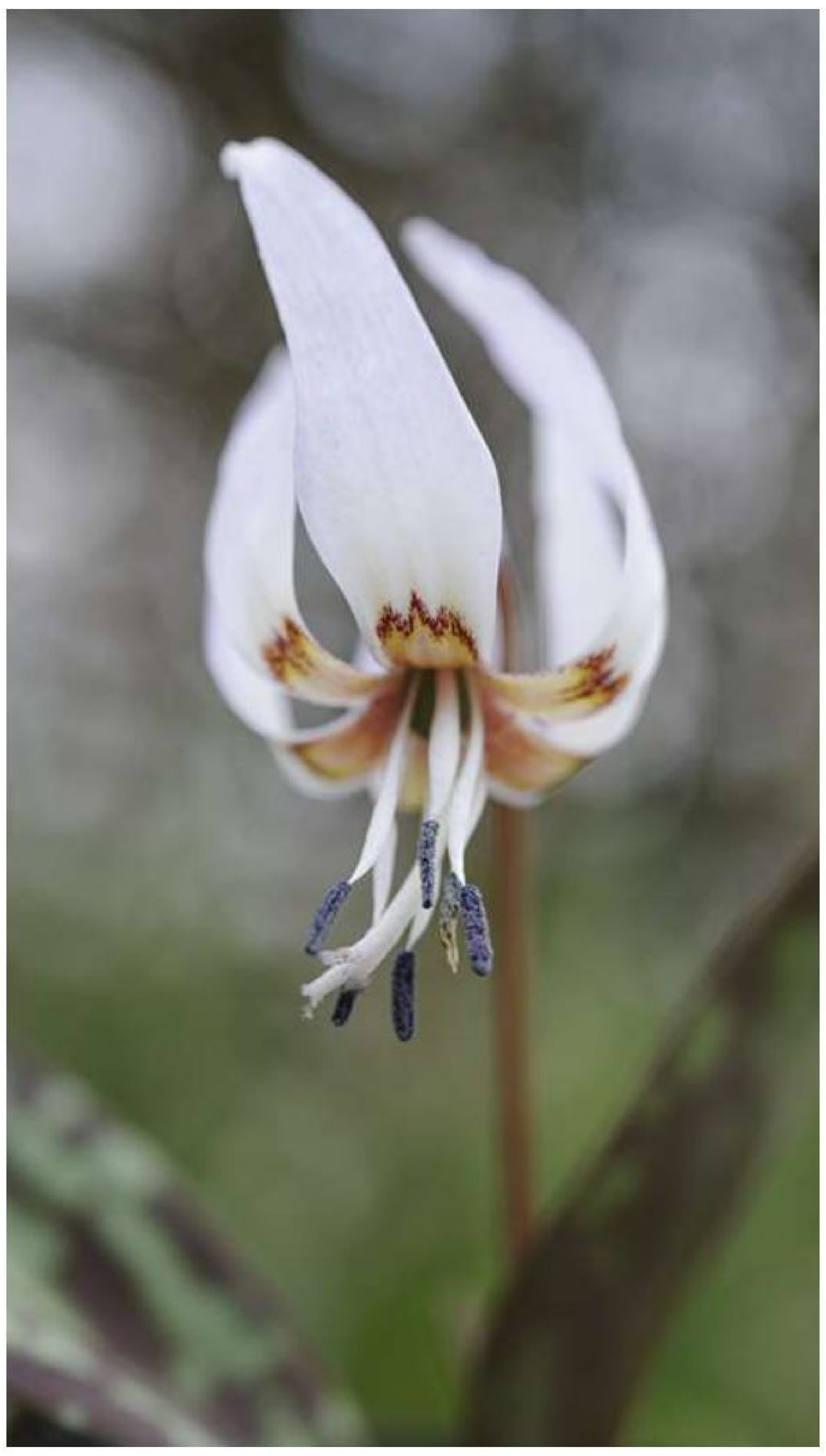
PRUNUS PADUS 'COLORATA'

A charming, medium-sized, open-textured tree characterised by its gaunt appearance. Its loose, rounded crown is made up of a criss-cross of long, thin, dark-coloured drooping branches, which in spring are dressed in reddish-bronze leaves. These fade to sombre green. The gappy five-petalled flowers are pale pink with creamy green centres. Small, rounded, bitter fruit with glossy skins follow before autumn turns the scene orange red. AGM.

Height 12m x 6m.
Origin A clone of the native bird cherry discovered in Sweden in the 1950s.
Conditions Full sun; best on neutral to alkaline, moist yet well-drained soils.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 3a-8b.
Season April to May for foliage and flowers. **FG**



SHARON PEARSON



JASON INGRAM

ERYTHRONIUM DENS-CANIS 'SNOWFLAKE'

In April the dark-green leaves of this dog's tooth violet emerge with chocolate-pink mottling, followed by flower stems with a single terminal bloom. The pure-white petals are swept back dramatically while the stamens, with their purple-tipped anthers, dangle enticingly for their insect pollinators. The throat of the flower is stained crimson and pink to attract attention. Its pointed, off-white bulbs, which resemble a canine incisor (hence its common name), are naked and must not dry out so are best purchased in the green.

Height 15cm.
Origin Across Europe, Portugal to Ukraine.
Conditions Humus-rich, moisture-retentive soil; dappled shade or sun.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 3a-9b.
Season March to May. **MC**

RICH, PURPLE-RED FLOWERS ARE PRODUCED ON TRAILING STEMS FROM APRIL ONWARDS

ERYSIMUM 'PARISH'S'

MAAYKE DE RIDDER

PULSATILLA VULGARIS SUBSP. *GRANDIS* 'PAPAGENO'

You know spring has arrived when this photogenic plant is in full flower. Originally introduced from the Czech Republic as a seed strain, it produces colours from white and pink to purple and red. All the flowers are more or less fringed and semi-double. We selected this pink seedling because of its double ray of heavily fringed petals, and we propagate it from root cuttings. Deep roots mean the plants are very drought tolerant. A group of five is the star of our rock garden and from May onwards attractive fluffy seedheads develop.

Height 30cm.
Origin Europe.
Conditions Sun, alkaline soil.
Hardiness At least RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.
Season April to May. **HK**

BRUNNERA MACROPHYLLA 'JACK FROST'

This plant has pretty forget-me-not flowers in April. Beautiful silver leaves netted with green get bigger and bigger as summer goes on. Given enough food and water the leaves can be magnificent, making good groundcover, and long outlast the flowers. They need a rich, deep, humus soil and an ample supply of water to look their best – but are worth it. *B. macrophylla* 'Looking Glass' is almost the same, but with solid, silver leaves that shimmer in the shade. AGM.

Height 40cm.
Origin A micropropagation sport introduced by Walters Gardens, Michigan, in 2000.
Conditions Shade, good soil, not too dry.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.
Season April to May. **DW**

JASON INGRAM

JASON INGRAM

ERYSIMUM 'PARISH'S'

This is perhaps the best perennial wallflower. Rich, red-purple flowers are produced on trailing stems from April through September. Like all erysimums, it needs to be renewed from cuttings every so often but plants will bloom well for three to four years. The RHS Plant Finder insists on 'Parish's' because that's how the cultivar was spelled in the first published version. But the man who discovered it wanted it to be called by his mother's maiden name, which was Parrish, so in my nursery at least we spell it with two 'r's.

Height 50cm.
Origin Accidental sport that occurred near Bath in the 1990s.
Conditions Full sun; good drainage.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.
Season April to September. **DW**

AMELANCHIER CANADENSIS

Where I grew up, in Connecticut, the amelanchiers bloomed before any other tree in the woods came into leaf – creating mounds of white visible from far away. Hot on the heels of the flowers come the leaves, a soft copper at first, gradually turning green. Edible purple berries appear in summer, and in autumn the whole tree turns yellow. Usually grown as a multi-stemmed large shrub, it casts only a light shade so is kind to gardeners.

Height 6m.
Origin Central and eastern North America.
Conditions Sun or light shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.
Season Flowers in April and autumn foliage from October. **DW**

JASON INGRAM

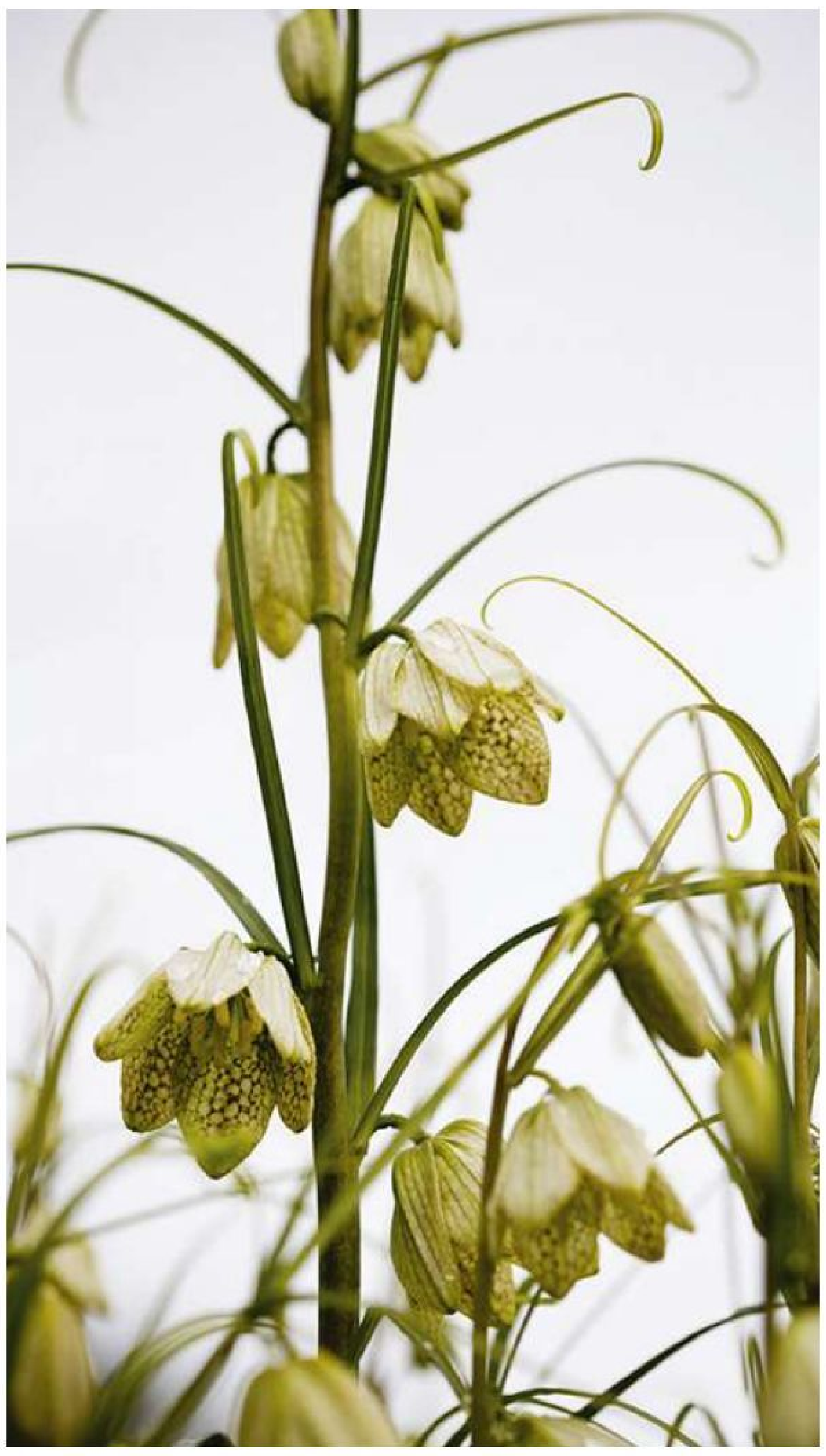
THE UPRIGHT BRANCHES OF THIS KURILE CHERRY ARE DRENCHED IN PINK BLOSSOM

PRUNUS NIPPONICA VAR. *KURILENSIS* 'BRILLIANT'

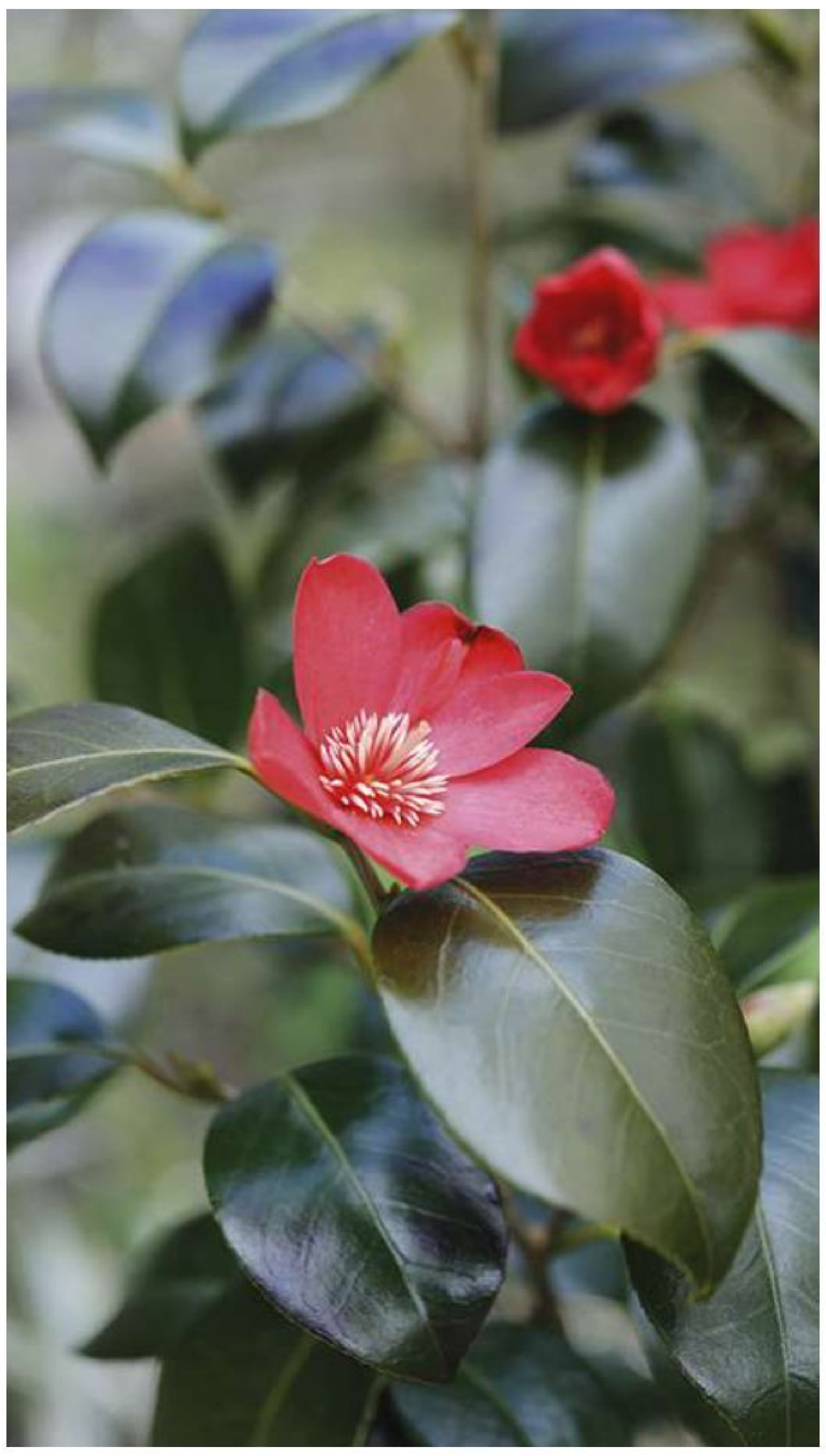
FRITILLARIA VERTICILLATA

This willowy fritillary has open, hanging cups of pale, creamy-green flowers, faintly chequered on the outside and more dramatically tartan within. These hang off long, slender, grey-green stems softened by a lattice work of thin, arching, grey-green leaves in whorls. Towards the top the leaves develop into curling tendrils, giving the plant great movement and providing a trellis work within which the enchanting dangling bells can be shown off. Bulbs are cooked and candied in its native land.

Height 60cm.
Origin Altai Mountains in northwestern China to Russia.
Conditions Rich, well-drained soil in full sun or semi-shade.
Hardiness USDA 4a-9b.
Season April to May. **FG**



SHARON PEARSON



JASON INGRAM

CAMELLIA JAPONICA 'KIMBERLEY'

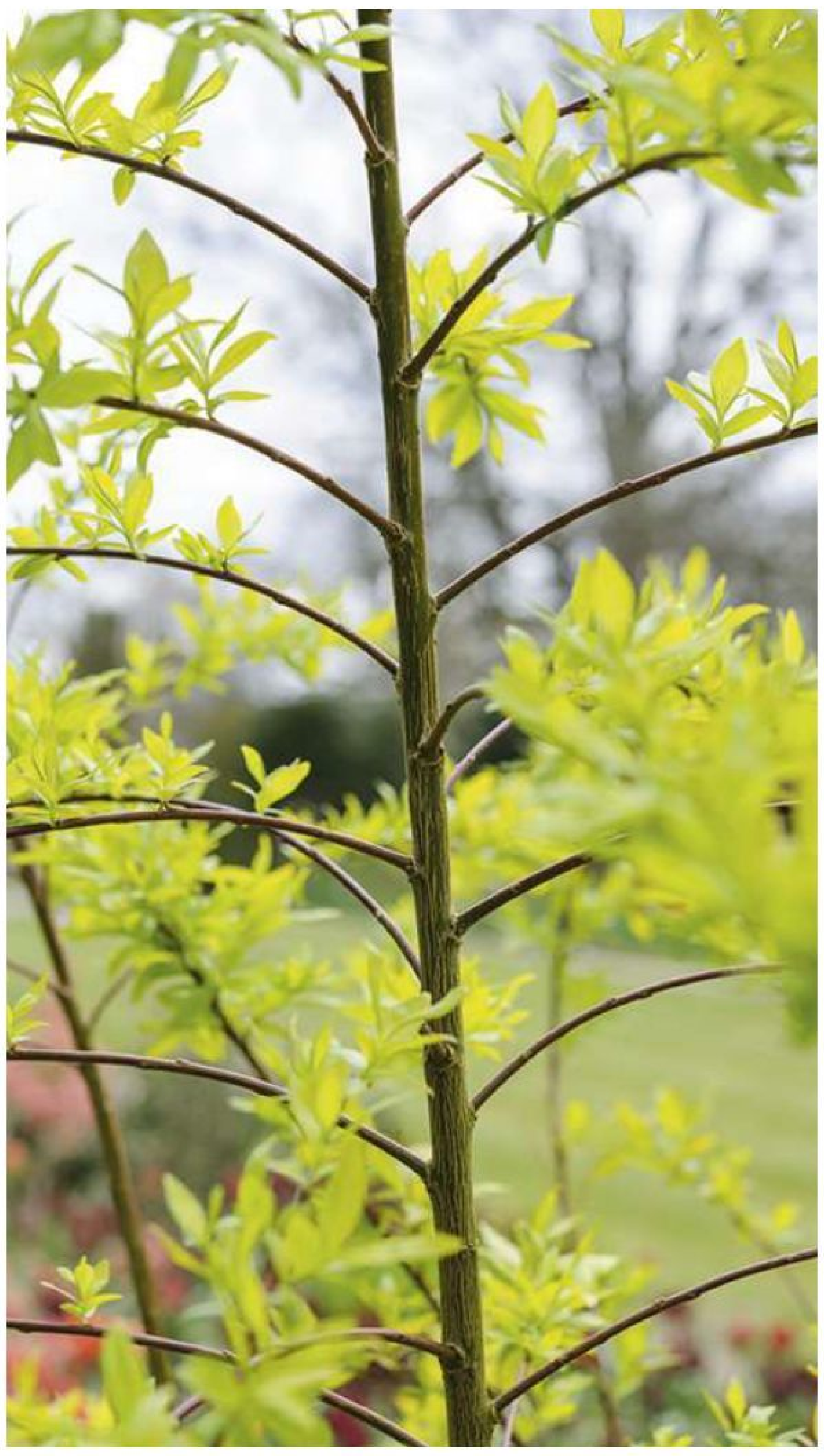
Covered from head to toe in a suit of lustrous evergreen leaves, this is as useful when it's not in flower as when it is. In flower, the combination of dark-green leaves and brilliant-red flowers, each with a gold boss, is incredibly smart. The slightly cup-shaped flowers drop off when they have finished, so they won't spoil the show. 'Kimberley' makes a good, solid contrast to more ethereal plants, particularly when placed with ferns or deciduous shrubs. Best in woodland conditions in humus-rich, acidic soil, in a little shade.

Height 5m.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Moist, humus-rich soil but does not tolerate saturated roots; shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.
Season April to May. **MR**

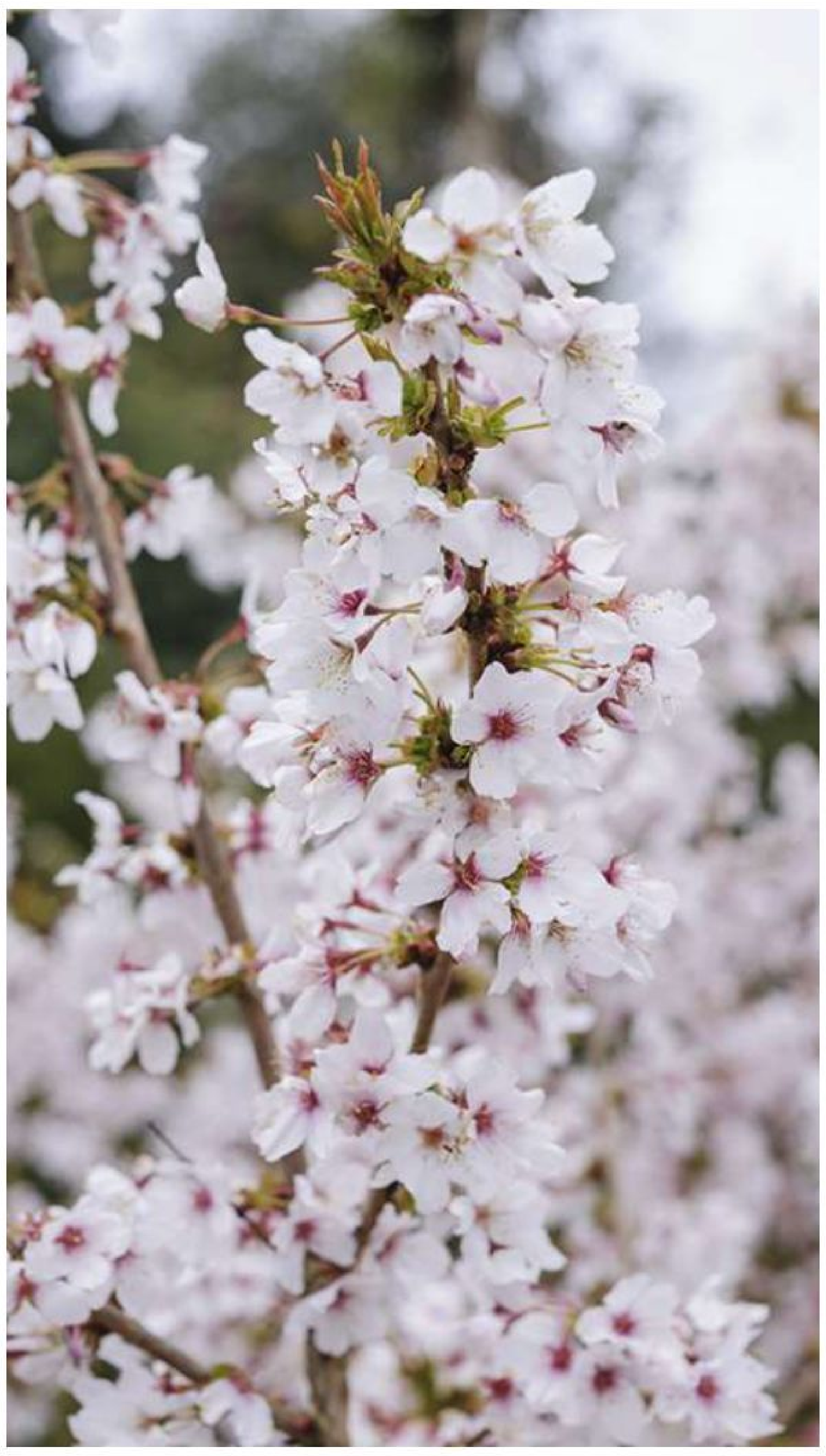
SALIX UDENSIS 'GOLDEN SUNSHINE'

Willows are wonderful plants for a mixed border as they can take being cut back hard each year, which keeps foliage fresh and allows you to restrict the plants to a height that associates well with herbaceous flowers. This golden cultivar has lovely foliage that doesn't scorch and is a good, lively counterpoint in the green garden tapestry. We have three plants: one, near the front of the border, is pollarded to woody knuckles at 1.2m; the two behind are pollarded to 1.9m. New growth will reach 1.5m in a season.

Height 5m.
Origin Discovered in Japan.
Conditions Any soil that doesn't get too dry.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-7b.
Season Foliage from spring to autumn. **MR**



JASON INGRAM



JASON INGRAM

PRUNUS NIPPONICA VAR. *KURILENSIS* 'BRILLANT'

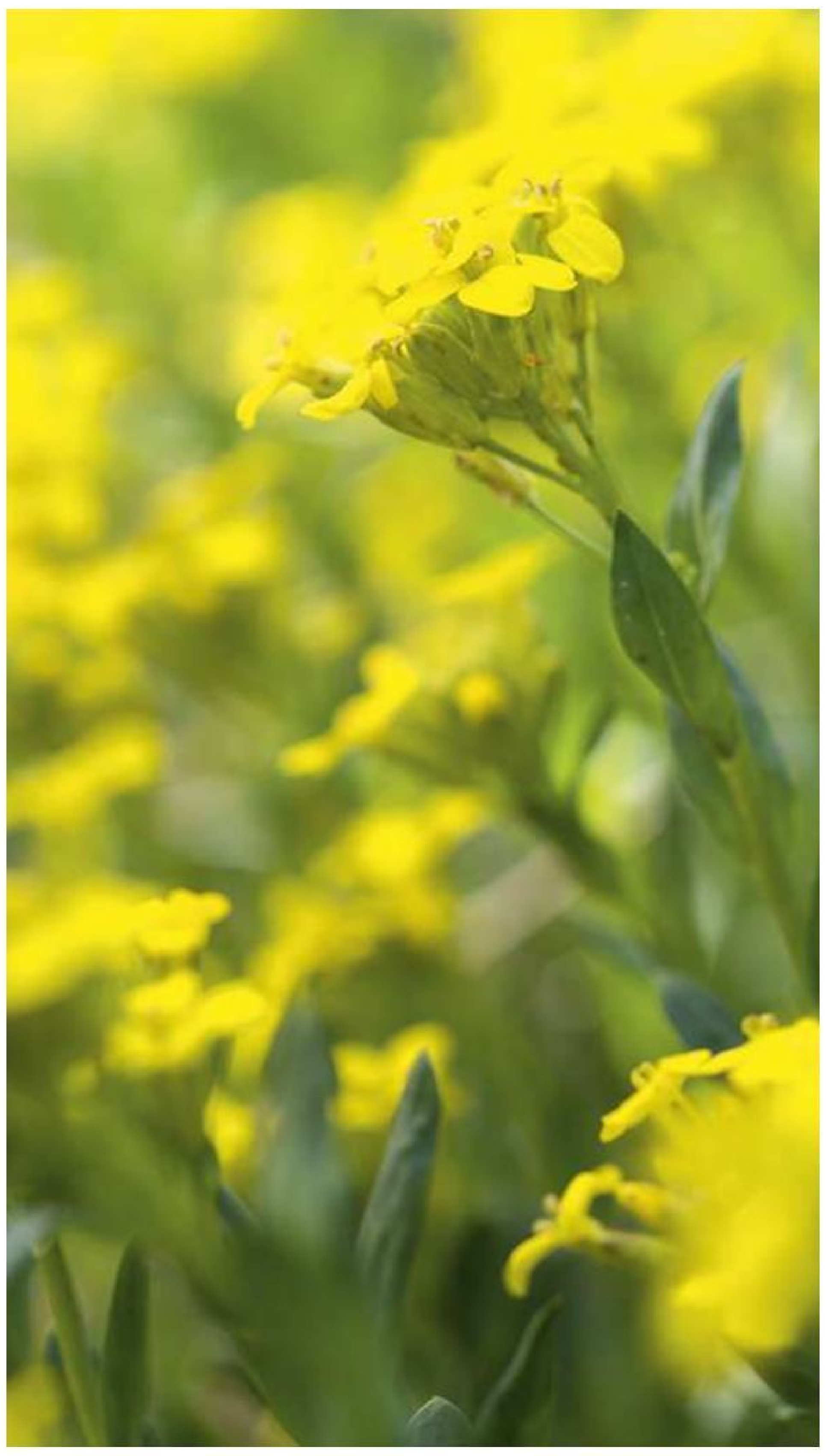
In spring, the upright branches of this pretty Kurile cherry are drenched in delicate pink blossoms that are particularly good when married with tulips. If left to its own devices, it will form a small, shrubby tree that will reach approximately 5m. However, I coppice it back hard biennially to 20cm after flowering. The strong shoots produced during the summer will colour up nicely in autumn and can be partnered with nerines. Plant in good soil and, if you choose to coppice, feed with good garden compost in spring to keep it going.

Height 5m.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Good soil.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Season April to May. **MR**

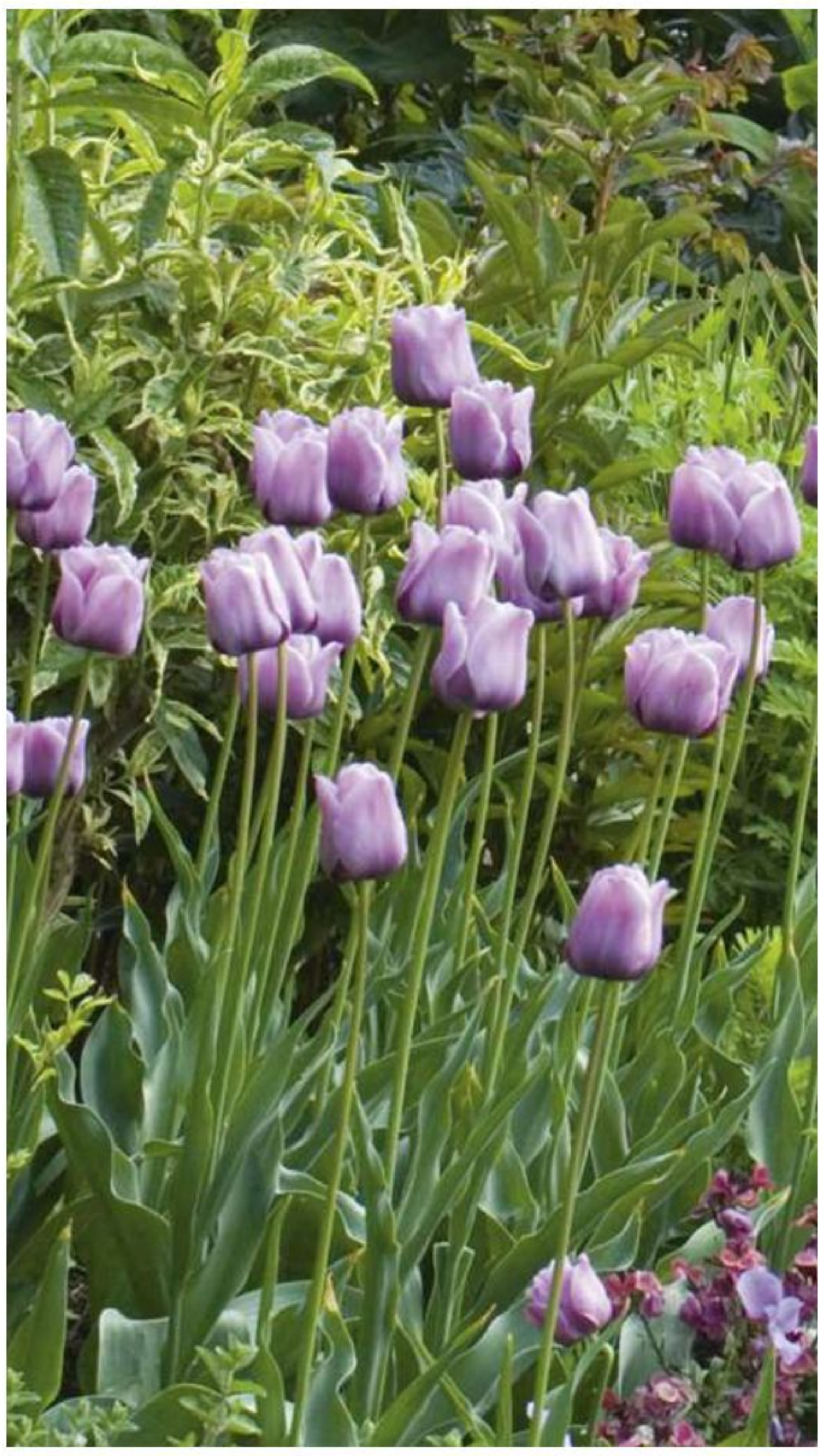
ALYSSOIDES UTRICULATA

Although this plant looks a lot like a wallflower, its rosettes remain evergreen in the worst of winter and it lives for much longer. Every spring you can enjoy the lively, clear-yellow flower spikes, where each flower has just four petals. After blooming, the spikes seem to stretch and make room for decorative seedheads with inflated seedpods that look like bladders and will provoke plenty of comment if you add them to a flower arrangement. You can collect the seeds to give away to friends or leave them on the plant, as they'll easily self-seed.

Height 40cm.
Origin Southwest Alps.
Conditions Drought and lime tolerant, prefers sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 6a-9a.
Season April to June. **HK**



MAAYKE DE RIDDER



JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS. DESIGN CAROL AND MALCOLM SKINNER

TULIPA 'BLEU AIMABLE'

A single late, shallow-cupped, chubby tulip held on sturdy stems, with flowers washed in intricate shades of lavender and mauve, paler around the edges. With age the colour intensifies as the petals pucker and twist, casting shadows on itself. With a rise in temperature the flowers open, revealing an enchanting base suffused in waves of marbled metallic blue, with turquoise-stained filaments carrying charcoal-black anthers around a creamy white pistil. Old bulbs regularly 'break', resulting in dramatic flowers streaked in purple, mauve and white.

Height 55cm.
Origin Raised in 1916 by EH Krelage & Son.
Conditions Full sun in moist but well-drained soil.
Hardiness USDA 3a-9b.
Season April to May. **FG**

EARLY SUMMER

As temperatures continue to rise, momentum gathers in the garden and sun-lovers show their hand. From nodding woodlanders to audacious perennials, this is the time the garden soars.

SHARON PEARSON

VALERIANA PYRENAICA

A delightful, clump-forming perennial with pointed, heart-shaped, light-green leaves, which are sharply serrated, puckered and coarsely textured. These are loosely clasped around and oppositely arranged in tiers on upright stems. The densely branched, domed clusters of pale pink to off-white flowers are scented and carried throughout the plant. With age flowers give way to whispy, fluffy seedheads that float elegantly above the main body. Looks heavenly when mixed in with common cow parsley, creating a light and airy tapestry of pink and white.

Height 1.2m.
Origin Found alongside waterways in the Pyrenees and the Iberian system. Naturalised in the British Isles.
Conditions Moist soil in sun or partial shade.
Hardiness USDA 4a-9b.
Season May to July. **FG**

JASON INGRAM

BAPTISIA 'PURPLE SMOKE'

In the mid-1990s there was renewed interest in the genus *Baptisia*, a member of the pea family, which produces multiple stems with terminal flower spikes in white, yellow, pink, blue and indigo. Most familiar in British gardens is *Baptisia australis*, a blue-flowered species with upright stems. *Baptisia* species are promiscuous and the late Rob Gardner of the North Carolina Botanical Garden introduced *Baptisia* 'Purple Smoke' in 1996, a hybrid between *B. australis* var. *aberrans* and *B. albescens* with dark stems and purplish-blue flowers.

Height 1.2m.
Origin Eastern North America.
Conditions Well-drained soil in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.
Season May to June. **MC**

ELECTRIC-PURPLE VEINS GUIDE INSECTS TO THE CENTRAL WHITE DISC

GERANIUM 'ORION'

JASON INGRAM

GERANIUM 'ORION'

In the late 1990s, Dutch nurseryman Brian Kabbes discovered a seedling of the hardy, mound-forming *Geranium* 'Brookside' (a hybrid between *G. clarkei* 'Kashmir Purple' and *G. pratense*) that had darker blue and much larger flowers than its parent. Electric-purple veins guide insects to the central white disc, which must produce copious amounts of nectar as bees are drawn to the blooms in their droves, despite the plant being sterile. It does not produce seed so has an extended flowering season. AGM.

Height 60-75cm.
Origin Hybrid raised in the Netherlands.
Conditions Reasonable soil in sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.
Season May to September. **MC**

MAAYKE DE RIDDER

DIANTHUS CRUENTUS

Neat mounds of grass-like foliage give rise to wiry flowering stems with clusters of small, blood-red flowers, usually with bright blue stamens. I say 'usually' because to begin with I found that my plants seldom set seed – a mystery to me until some observant friend pointed out that most plants were either all-male (hence the blue stamens) or all-female with a white stigma, and few were both sexes on the same plant. The flowerheads look like fireworks, and work well with smaller grasses such as *Stipa tenuissima* or *Eragrostis curvula* 'Totnes Burgundy'.

Height 45-60cm.
Origin Balkans.
Conditions Well-drained, preferably neutral to alkaline soil in sun.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Season May to August. **MC**

JASON INGRAM

PAEONIA DELAVAYI

There are numerous tree peonies. I assume many are more fancy than this straightforward *Paeonia delavayi*. I have had it for at least 25 years in a draughty, dry and cold place in the shadow of oak trees and its performance is admirable. The bushes are more than two metres high with relatively small, blood-red flowers, which I have to admit are slightly obscured by the foliage. But who cares? This is so beautiful and looks clean and healthy until autumn, when the big seedpods loosen their shiny black seeds.

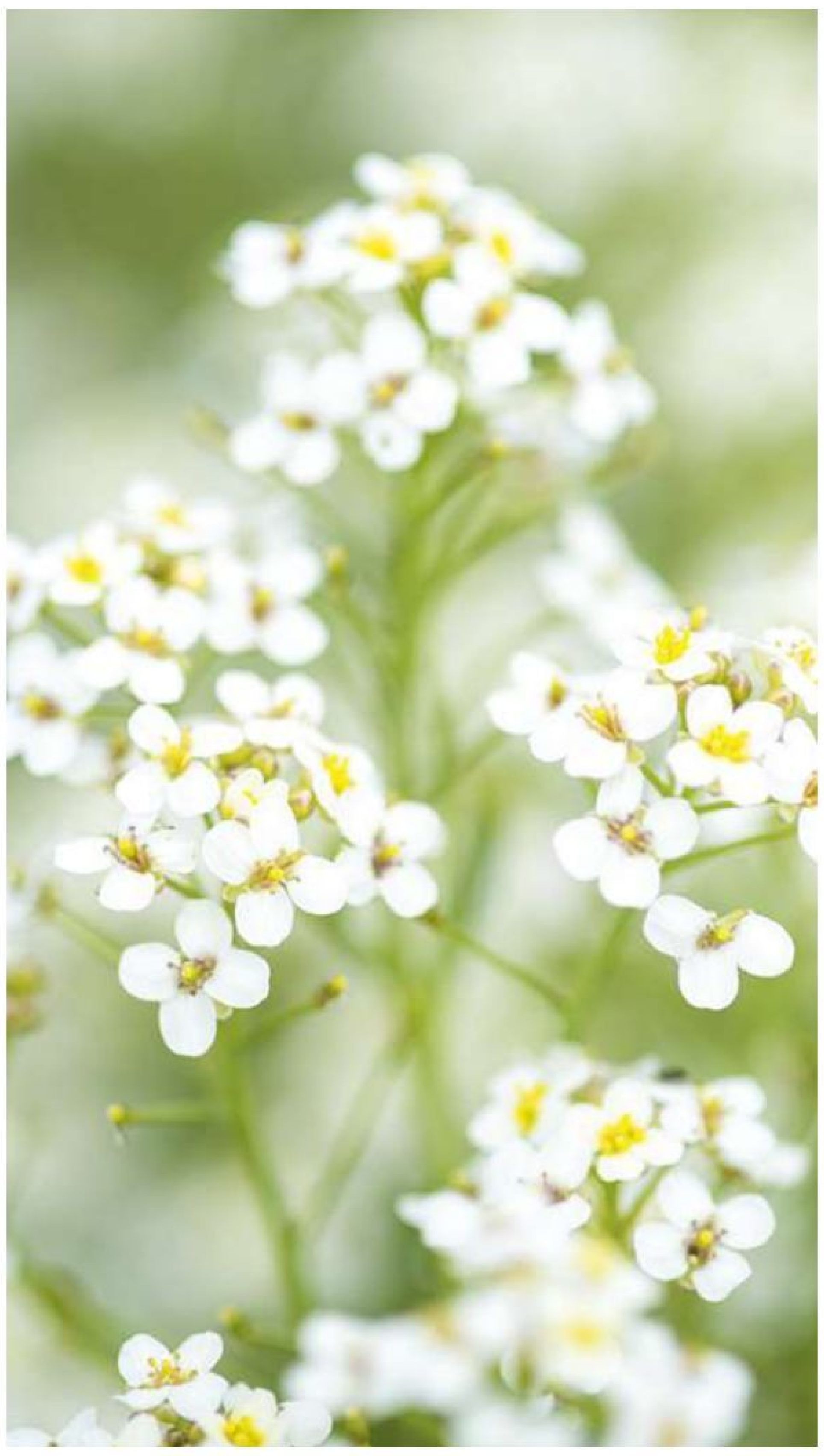
Height 1.5-2m.
Origin China.
Conditions Any soil, as this is far less demanding than herbaceous peonies. Sun to part shade.
Hardiness At least RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.
Season May to June. **HK**

> THE FLOWERS ARE LIKE TINY VICTORIAN POSIES IN A RUFF OF PALE-PINK BRACTS
>
> *ASTRANTIA* 'BUCKLAND'

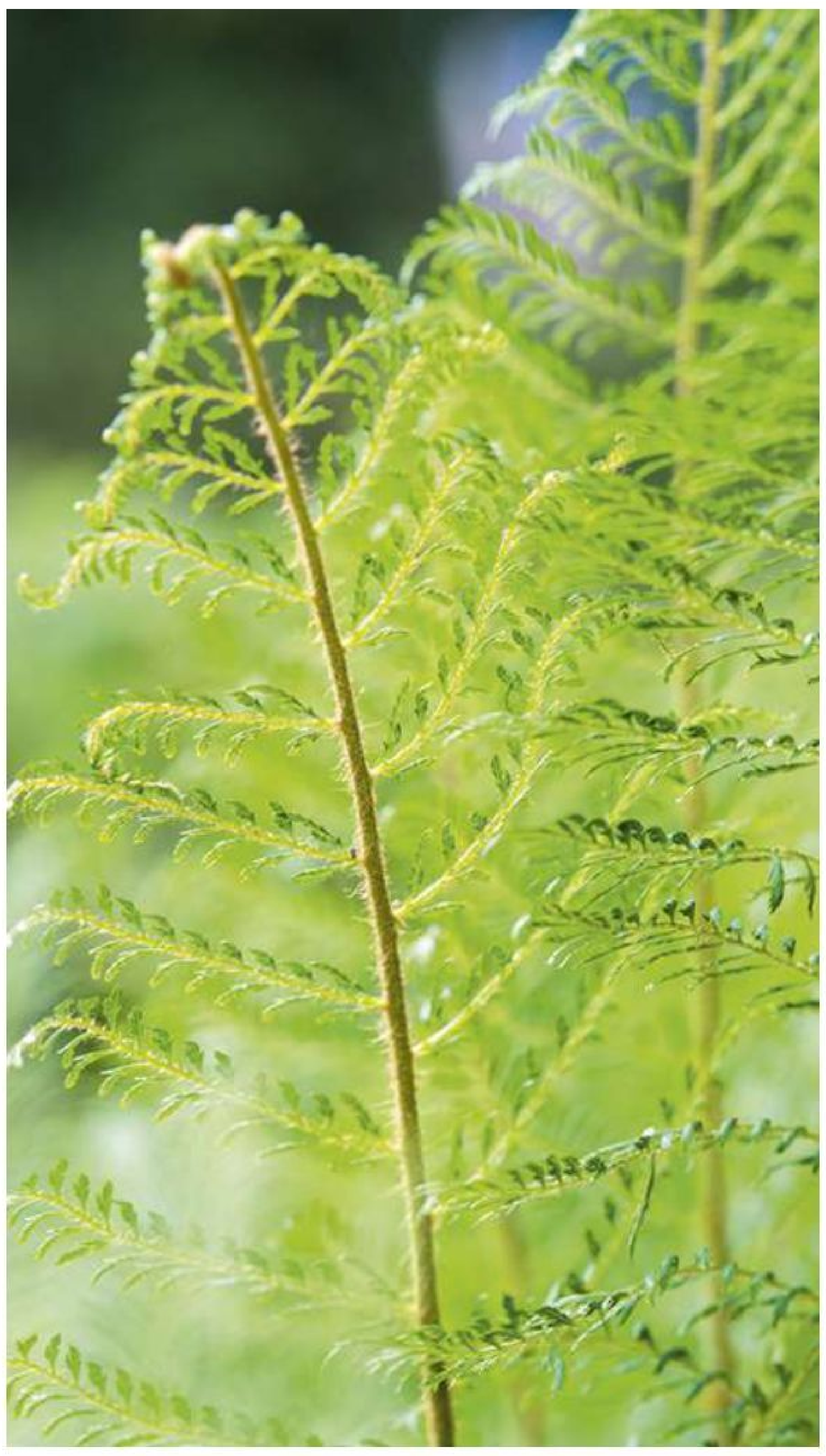
CRAMBE GRANDIFLORA

This rarely grown Caucasian species is the perfect mix between the tall *Crambe cordifolia* and the low *Crambe maritima*. I can never understand why a plant as good as this is found only in the wild. At the end of May the first flowers start to open and you can smell the unmistakable scent of rapeseed, although this is sweeter. The inflorescence is a wide multi-branched umbel with hundreds of white flowers, bigger than in *C. cordifolia*, and with soft-yellow centres. Seed is easily set and sometimes it germinates en masse in spring.

Height 1.2m.
Origin Caucasus, Crimea.
Conditions Good fertile soil, preferably alkaline, in a sunny spot.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season May. **HK**



MAAYKE DE RIDDER



MAAYKE DE RIDDER

POLYSTICHUM SETIFERUM GREEN LACE (= 'GRACILLIMUM')

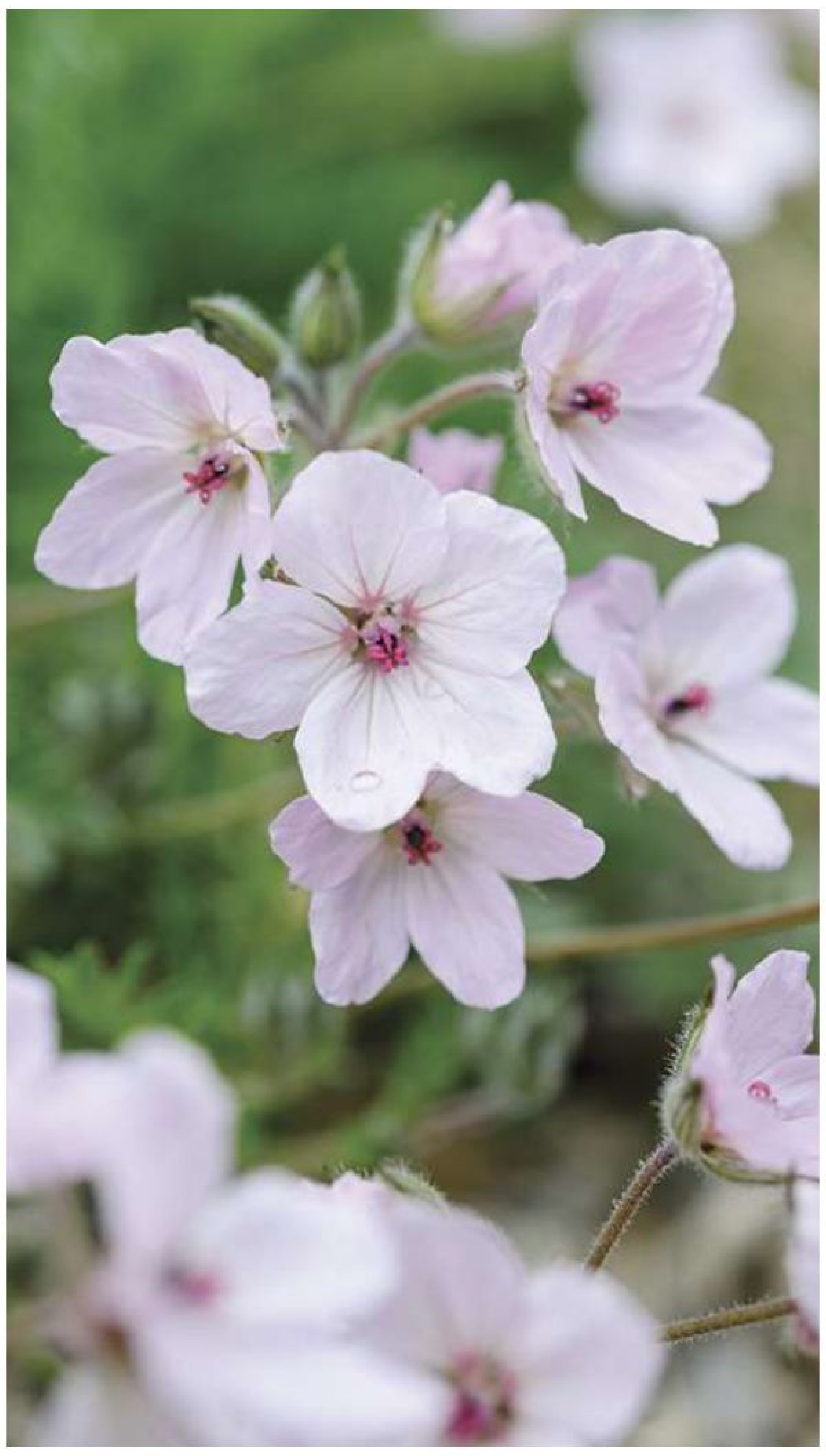
An American visitor to our nursery once described this magnificent fern as 'dynamite', and he was right. The fronds of this rare cultivar, a selected seedling of 'Pulcherrimum Bevis', are extremely fine, almost thread-like, and yet they remain green throughout winter. Old plants can grow to almost one metre across, but this will take years. You can't propagate from spores or bulbils – the only way is by division. But once you have it, you can be sure you'll have it for your whole lifetime.

Height 70cm.
Origin Garden origin from European species.
Conditions Not too dry, alkaline is no problem. Part shade to full shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season All year round. **HK**

ERODIUM 'SPECIAL ROSE'

Most erodiums are short-lived, but *Erodium chrysanthum* goes on and on. It normally has pale-yellow flowers, but this pink hybrid, available for many years as just 'pink form', has now been given the name 'Special Rose'. Because it sets no seed it will go on blooming month after month, providing pale, rose-pink flowers above a neat clump of finely cut, grey leaves. Given plenty of sunshine and good drainage conditions, it will delight for years – my plant is now over 12 years old. To propagate the plant, take short stubby little basal cuttings in March.

Height 15-20cm.
Origin Hybrid of *Erodium chrysanthum* x *Erodium* sp.
Conditions Full sun, good drainage.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.
Season May to October. **DW**



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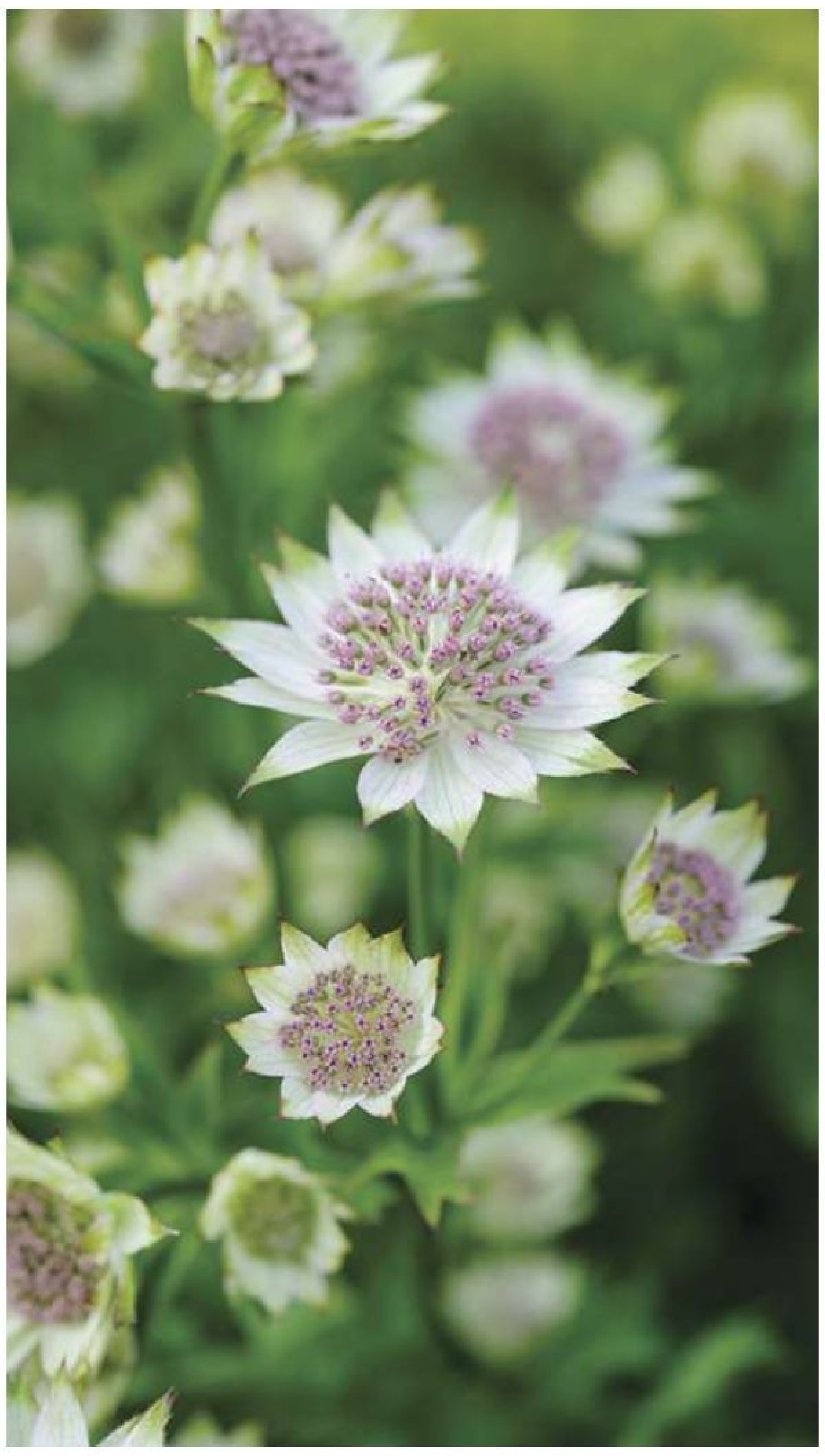


JASON INGRAM

ASTRANTIA 'BUCKLAND'

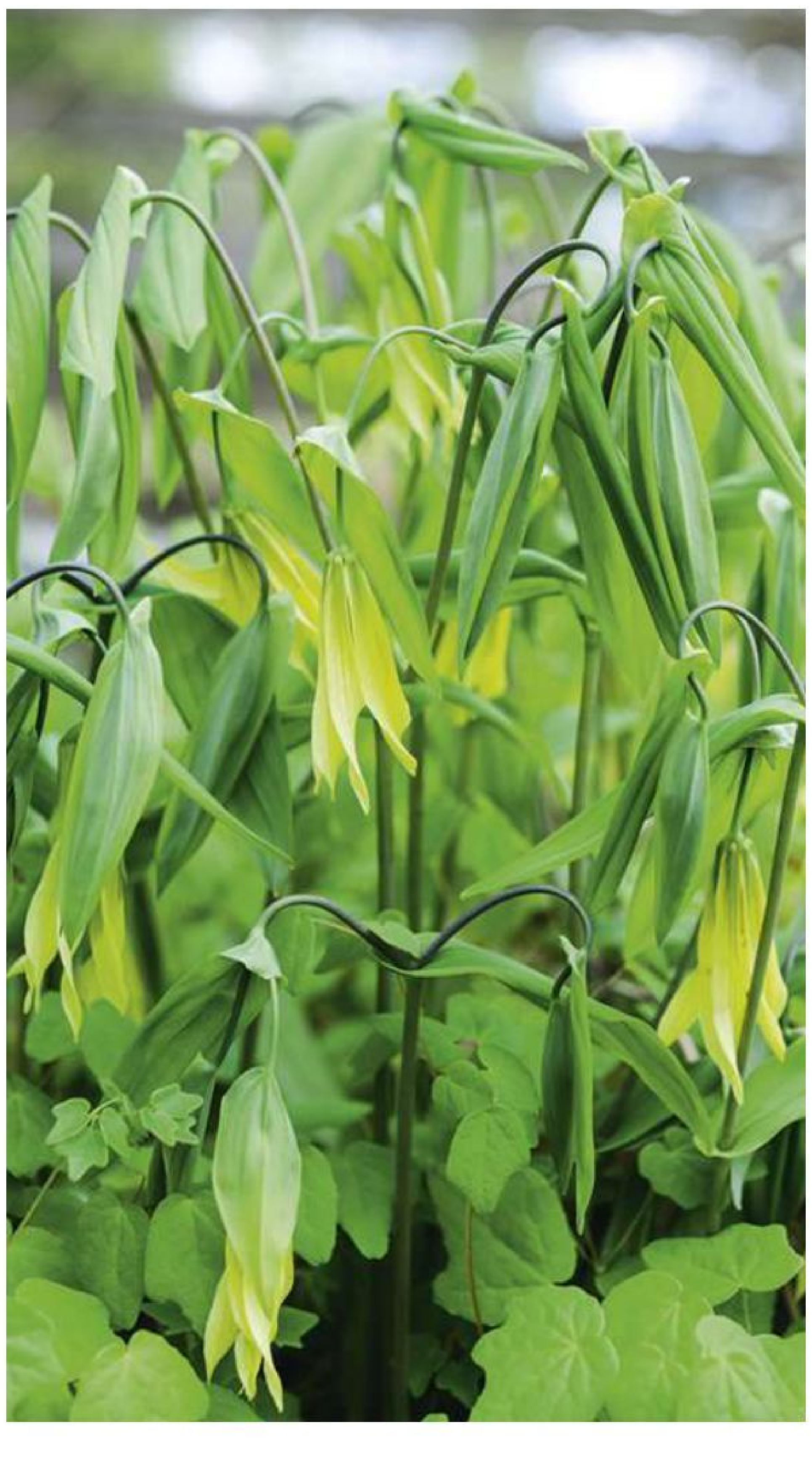
Astrantias are always good-value garden plants, establishing quickly and self-seeding, but the modern hybrids are sterile, putting all their energy into flowering rather than producing seedlings. Thick with flowers in May and June, if cut back hard in early July they will flower magnificently again in September and even October. This is my favourite, its pale-pink flowers like tiny Victorian posies in a ruff of pale-pink bracts. Although they are said to like shade, I find my very best astrantias are sited in damp sun. They just don't like to dry out.

Height 70cm.
Origin Hybrid of *A. major* x *A. maxima*.
Conditions Sun or light shade, soil that's not too dry.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.
Season May to June, September. **DW**

UVULARIA GRANDIFLORA VAR. *PALLIDA*

I love spring woodlanders even though they are so ephemeral. Each day produces new promise as plants emerge and flower before the woodland canopy closes to leave them in shade. This form of merrybells has pale, greenish-yellow, pendent flowers on willowy, arching stems and simple, lance-shaped leaves. The six slender petals are gently twisted and sway in the slightest breeze. They are clump-forming and multiply by seed or by creeping rhizomes, and are delightful with epimediums, *Anemone nemorosa* and eythroniums.

Height 30-60cm.
Origin Eastern USA.
Conditions Moisture-retentive, humus-rich soil in dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.
Season April to May. **MC**



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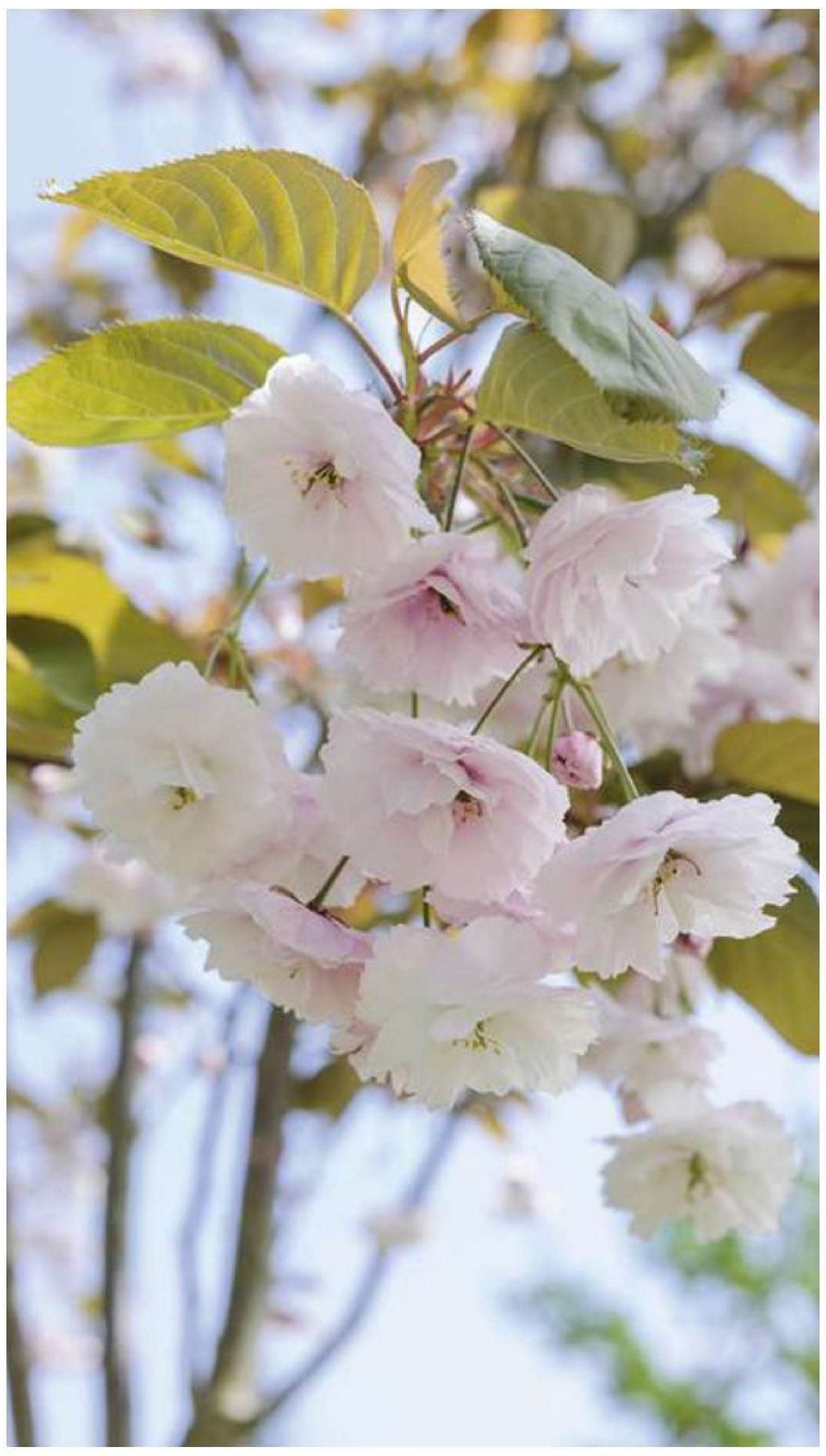


JASON INGRAM

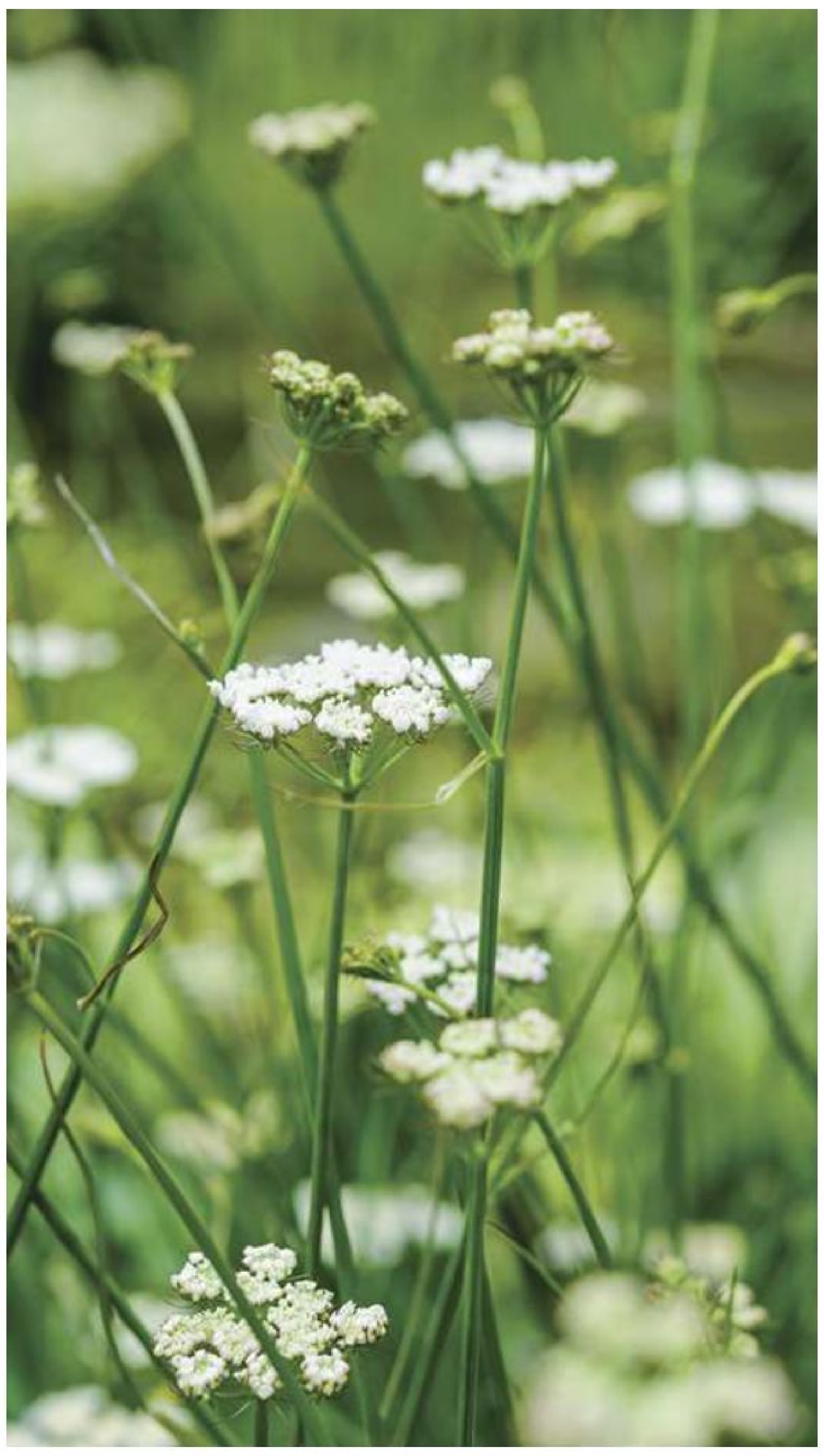
PRUNUS 'SHIROFUGEN'

I was first encouraged to appreciate the elegance and beauty of this flowering cherry tree by Christopher Lloyd while I was working at Great Dixter in East Sussex. Christo pointed out the copper tint of the new foliage and the long, pendent stalks, which hold pretty, double flowers that slightly darken with age and scatter to the ground in a confetti of petals. Its leaves also colour well in autumn before falling. It is best grown asa multi-stemmed tree, which will enhance the plant's spreading habit. AGM.

Height 4-6m.
Origin Japan.
Conditions Good, moist garden soil.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-7b.
Season Flowers in May followed by colourful foliage in autumn. **MR**

THE MOST ELEGANT OF ONIONS, WITH TALL STEMS THRUST UP THROUGH GLAUCOUS LEAVES

NECTAROSCORDUM SICULUM



JASON INGRAM

BUNIUM BULBOCASTANUM

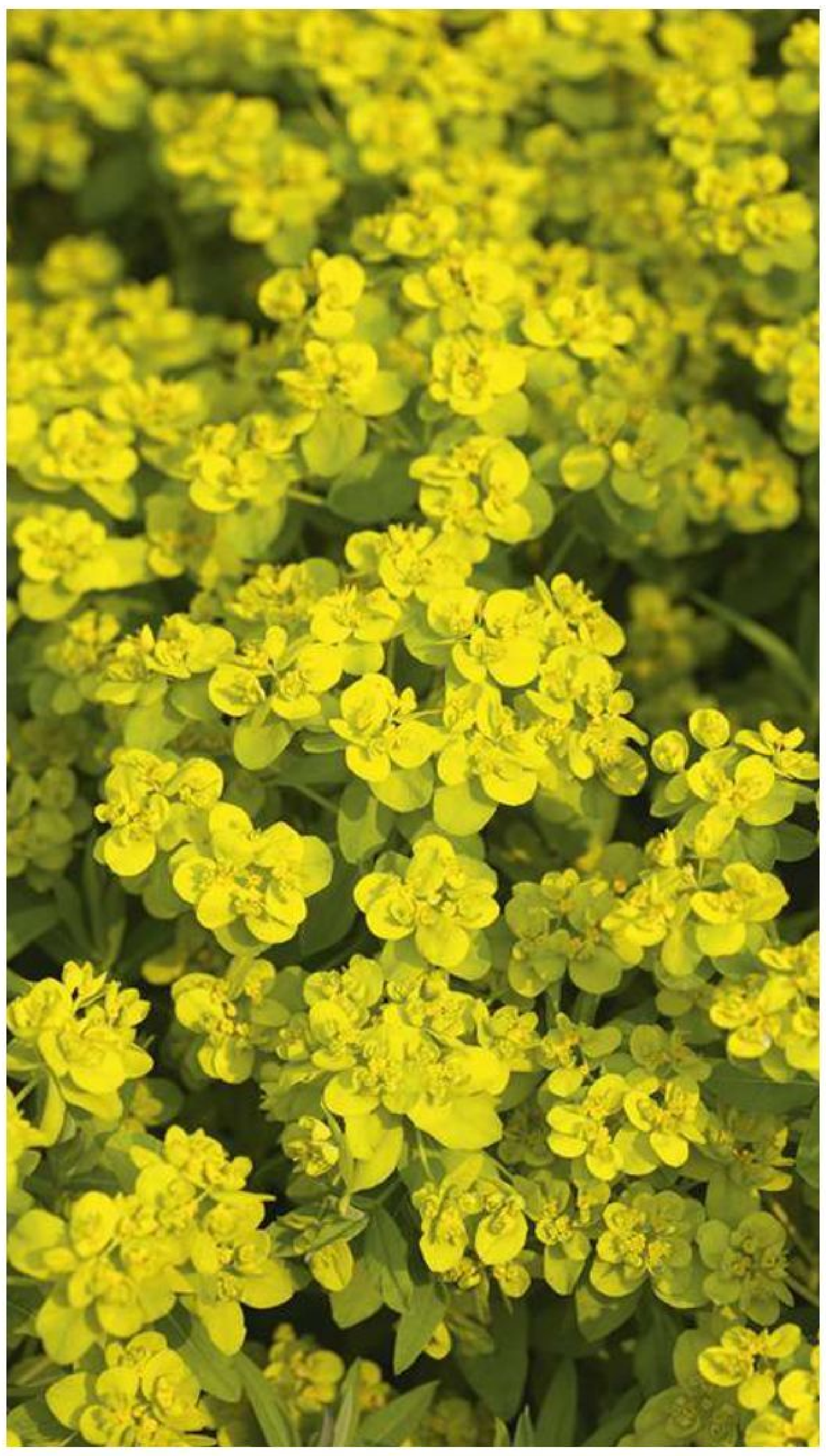
Bunium bulbocastanum is also known as the earth chestnut, thanks to its small, crunchy tubers (pignuts), which can be eaten raw or cooked, and taste like sweet chestnuts. Its seeds are edible too, but I grow it for its beautiful, fine foliage (which can also be eaten) and for its perfect, white umbels. I was told it liked a dry site, so I planted it in gravel where it became a pretty 40cm-high plant, but it then sowed itself into sticky clay at the edge of the pond where it enjoyed life so much that it grew into a ravishing 90cm of airy leaves and tall-stemmed flowers.

Height 50-90cm.
Origin Europe and Asia.
Conditions Sun, damp or dry.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.
Season May to June. **DW**

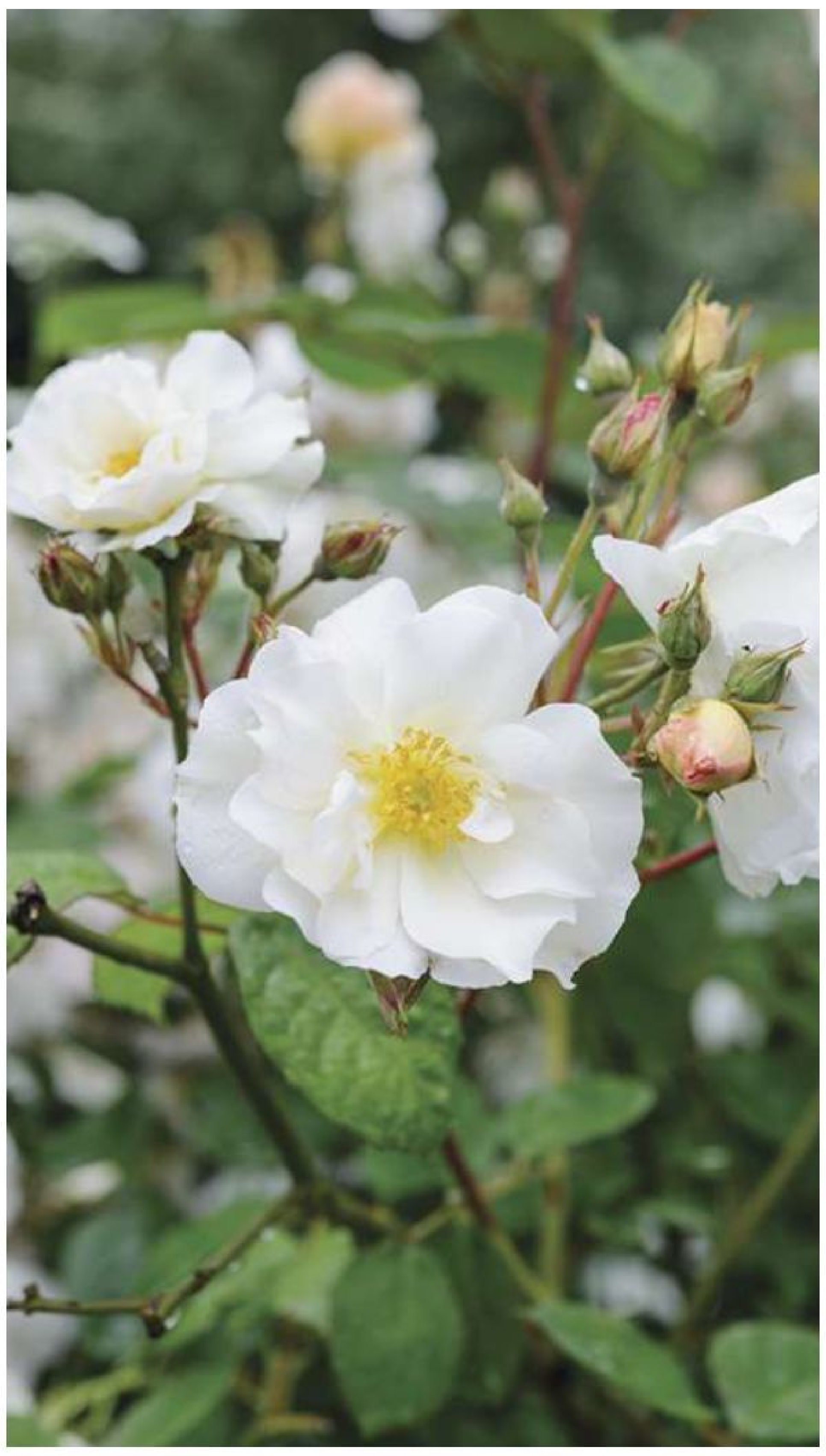
EUPHORBIA PALUSTRIS

The fresh green stems of this euphorbia carry arching, long, linear, dark-green leaves, which are flashed with white midribs, leading to a bun of acid-lime green at the centre. The stems elongate as the central floret flattens out. Flowering side branches enhance the impression of electric acid green, bleeding down the uppermost canopy. In midsummer the plant takes on a green willowy habit only to switch on again for the autumn with crimson, yellow and orange. AGM.

Height 1.2m.
Origin Native to Europe from Sweden down to Spain and east to the Caucasus.
Conditions Wet moist soil; will thrive in swampy conditions in sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.
Season Flowers May to June; autumn colour October to November. **FG**



SHARON PEARSON



JASON INGRAM

ROSA 'PENELOPE'

Graham Stuart Thomas described *Rosa* 'Penelope' as 'one of the very best roses for creating a white effect without being white' and it looks particularly good with greys and pale, icy blues. It is continuous in flower and superb for cutting – Vita Sackville-West noted that the buds continue to open once in the vase. The semi-double blooms are held in airy sprays and open peachy-pink, turning white with age. The sprays are a beautiful ensemble of old and new blooms, and importantly, the flowers shatter once finished so do not sully the show. Deadhead and feed to keep the display going. AGM.

Height 1m.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Any good garden soil in sun.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-10b.
Season June to July. **MR**

NECTAROSCORDUM SICULUM

The most elegant and graceful of onions, this used to be called *Allium siculum*. Tall stems thrust up through twisted, glaucous leaves, each tipped with a narrow, pointed cluster of buds in a papery sheath. As the buds expand they bend over demurely like shy maidens hiding the purple-flushed inside of each flower under a subtle cream and grey-green skirt. Amazingly, as the seeds begin to ripen they turn up again to make a bouquet of pointed elf hats. In sandy soil it can self-seed excessively, but never seeds for me.

Height 1-1.2m.
Origin Mediterranean, from France to Turkey.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun or light shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-10b.
Season May to July. **DW**

JASON INGRAM

18+

WHAT IS

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THE HIGH-OCTANE, MAGENTA FLOWERS ARE STREAKED IN FLASHES OF WHITE AND GOLD

GLADIOLUS COMMUNIS SUBSP. *BYZANTINUS*

GLADIOLUS COMMUNIS SUBSP. *BYZANTINUS*

This plant produces unashamedly high-octane, magenta flowers, distinctly gladioli in shape, with centres streaked in subtle flashes of white and gold that decorate upright stems enfolded by thin, sword-like, pleated leaves. This cormous perennial struggles to increase in colder parts of the UK, but with heat it's prolific – hence the naturalised colonies in Devon and Cornwall. *Gladiolus italicus* is vastly inferior but is often sold as byzantinus to unsuspecting customers. Electrifying next to lime-green euphorbias. AGM.

Height 70cm.
Origin Native of Spain, northwestern Africa, Sicily.
Conditions Sunny position in a sheltered site. Any soil free of waterlogging.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-10b.
Season May to July. **FG**

SHARON PEARSON

JASON INGRAM

EREMURUS 'JOANNA'

Eremuruses are summer dormant and often struggle through wet summers. The glorious *Eremurus* 'Joanna' is stronger than most and copes well in our maritime climate. The flower spikes are huge, each one composed of hundreds of star-shaped, white flowers with a yellow eye. 'Joanna' looks best when grown with taller perennials and shrubs. When planting, make a hole 10cm deep that is wide enough to accommodate the star-shaped crowns, add sharp grit and then cover, ensuring the bud of the crown is just nosing the surface. AGM.

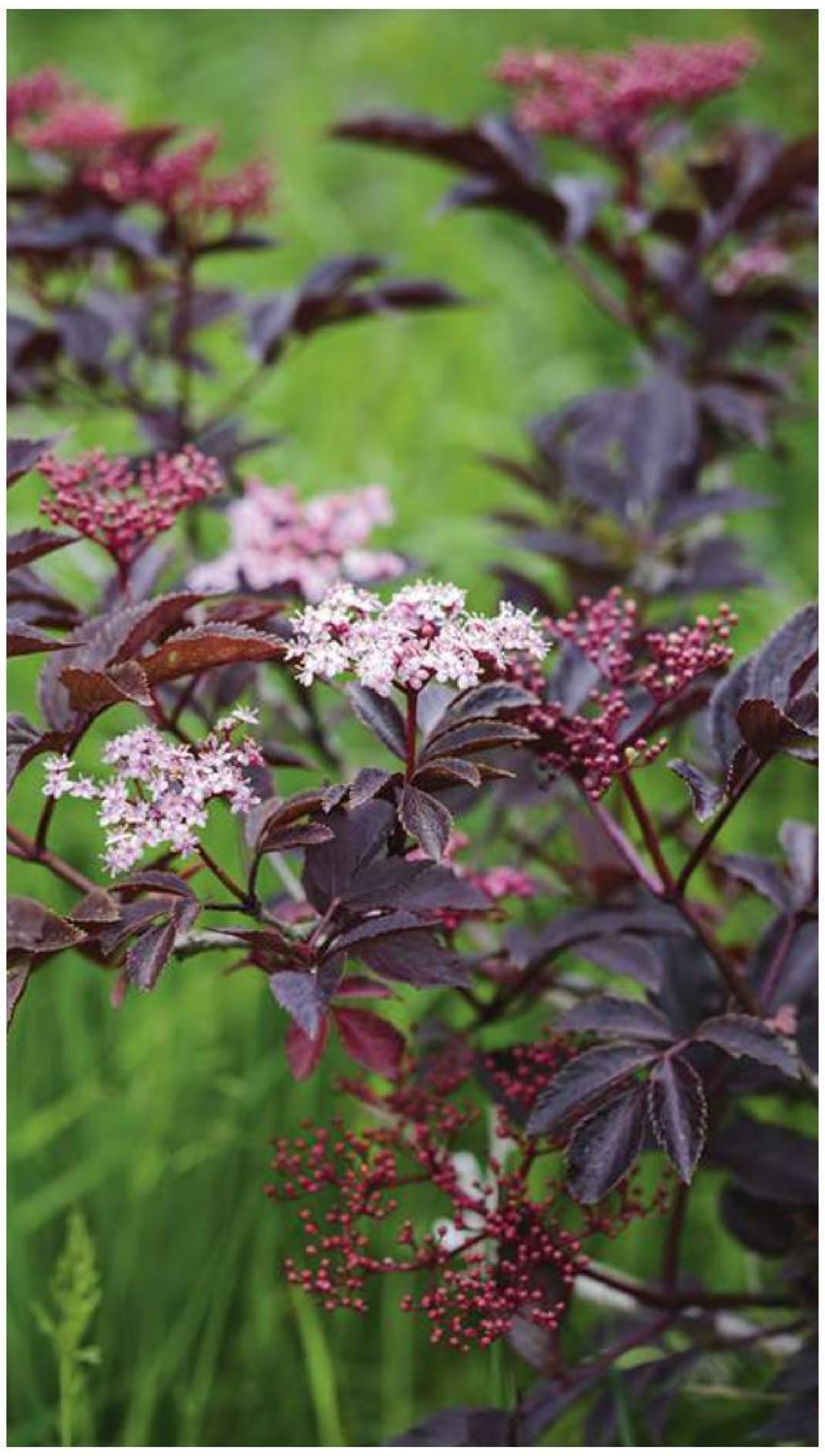
Height 3m.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Ideally, full sun and not too wet in summer.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.
Season June. **MR**

LYCHNIS FLOS-JOVIS

This pretty campion, commonly called the flower of Jove, is a more refined and more perennial version of the common *Lychnis coronaria*, and it should be better known. The slender, branching stems are held above basal leaves covered in a silvery patina and carry clusters of lovely pink flowers. These work well with cool blues, such as the spikes of old-world salvias or *Nigella damascena* Moody Blues. Plant in good soil that does not sit wet. Flowers are produced in the second year from seed and can either be planted in drifts at 20cm apart, or scattered naturally through the border. AGM.

Height 40-50cm.
Origin Europe.
Conditions Good garden soil.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.
Season June to July. **MR**

JASON INGRAM



JASON INGRAM

SAMBUCUS NIGRA F. PORPHYROPHYLLA 'THUNDERCLOUD'

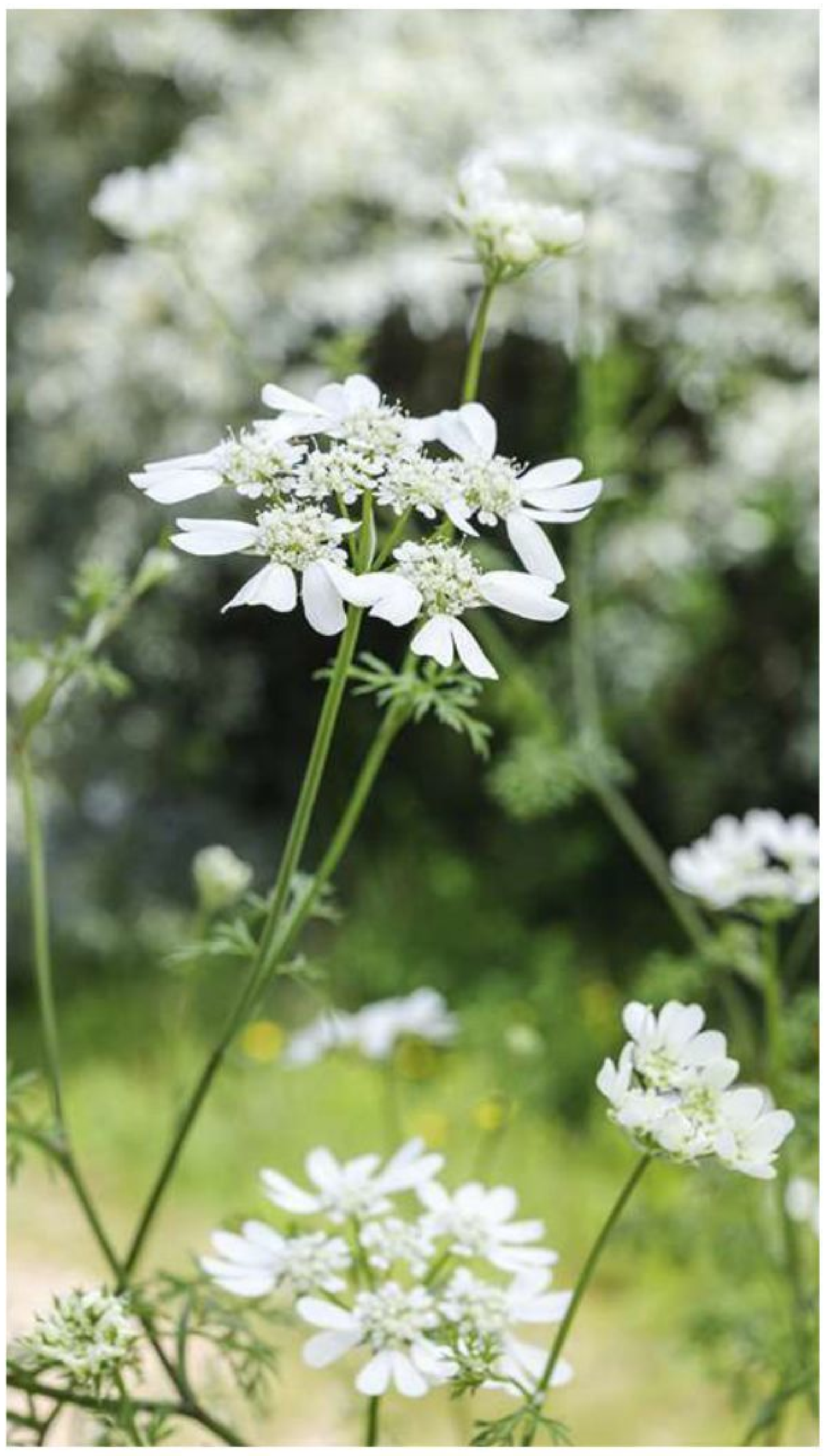
In early summer, sweetly fragrant, pale-pink flowers emerge from clusters of deep-red flower buds to the delight of insects and humans alike. This wonderful older cultivar was spotted by plantsman Christopher Sanders as a sport on a branch of the purple-leaved cultivar 'Guincho Purple' at the Dorothy Clive Garden in Staffordshire. With the owner's permission, he successfully propagated some cuttings and it was released by Bridgemere Nurseries in 1997. AGM.

Height 4m.
Origin Sport of *Sambucus nigra* f. *porphyrophylla* 'Guincho Purple'.
Conditions Most soils including alkaline.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-7b.
Season May to June. **MC**

ORLAYA GRANDIFLORA

This pretty annual, a relative of cow parsley, is popular for naturalistic plantings. It has fine, filigree foliage and large, flat-headed umbels of white flowers with much enlarged outer petals. Most umbellifer seeds require sowing fresh in autumn and winter so they receive a freeze/thaw regime that breaks down the inhibitors to germination. *Orlaya grandiflora* germinates readily in autumn but can be erratic in spring. Occasionally, the foliage turns yellow and mature plants collapse for no apparent reason – usually the result of carrot fly. AGM.

Height 30-45cm.
Origin Mediterranean.
Conditions Sharply drained, lean soil in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season June to July. **MC**



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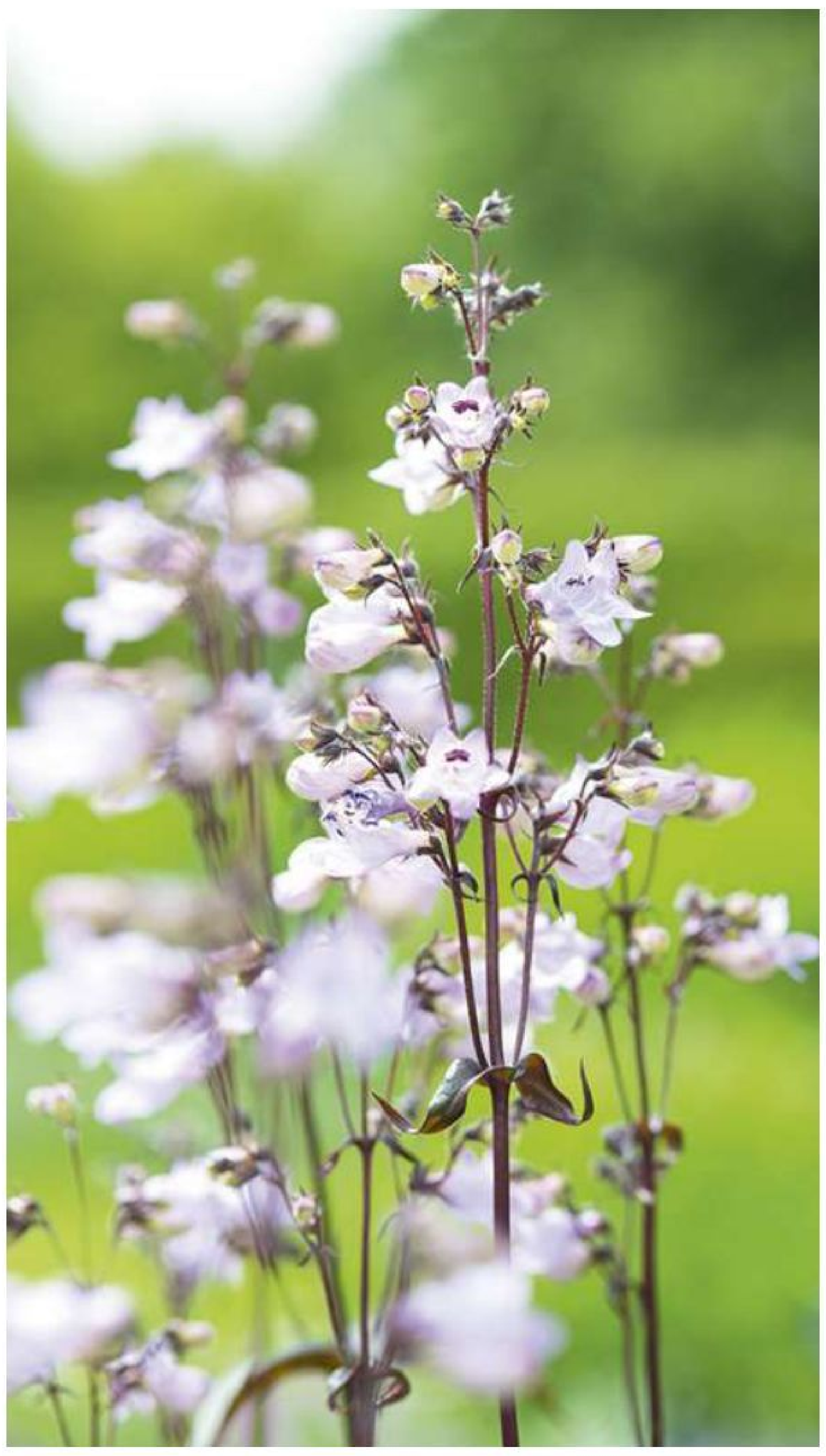


MAAYKE DE RIDDER

PENSTEMON DIGITALIS 'JOKE'

Don't be fooled by the name; this is a plant that deserves to be taken seriously. In fact, Joke is a fairly common Dutch name and this cultivar was named by a former teacher of mine, Paul Wilmink, for his wife. He still grows flowers for cutting and selected this seedling, with its strong, blackish-red stems, for its sturdiness. It is the perfect cut flower, bearing large panicles of tubular, lilac-pink flowers. In winter purple-red-leafed rosettes appear alongside the old flower stalks, which bear pointed, brown-red seed capsules.

Height 1m.
Origin North America.
Conditions Any well-drained soil in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season June to July. **HK**

GILLENIA TRIFOLIATA

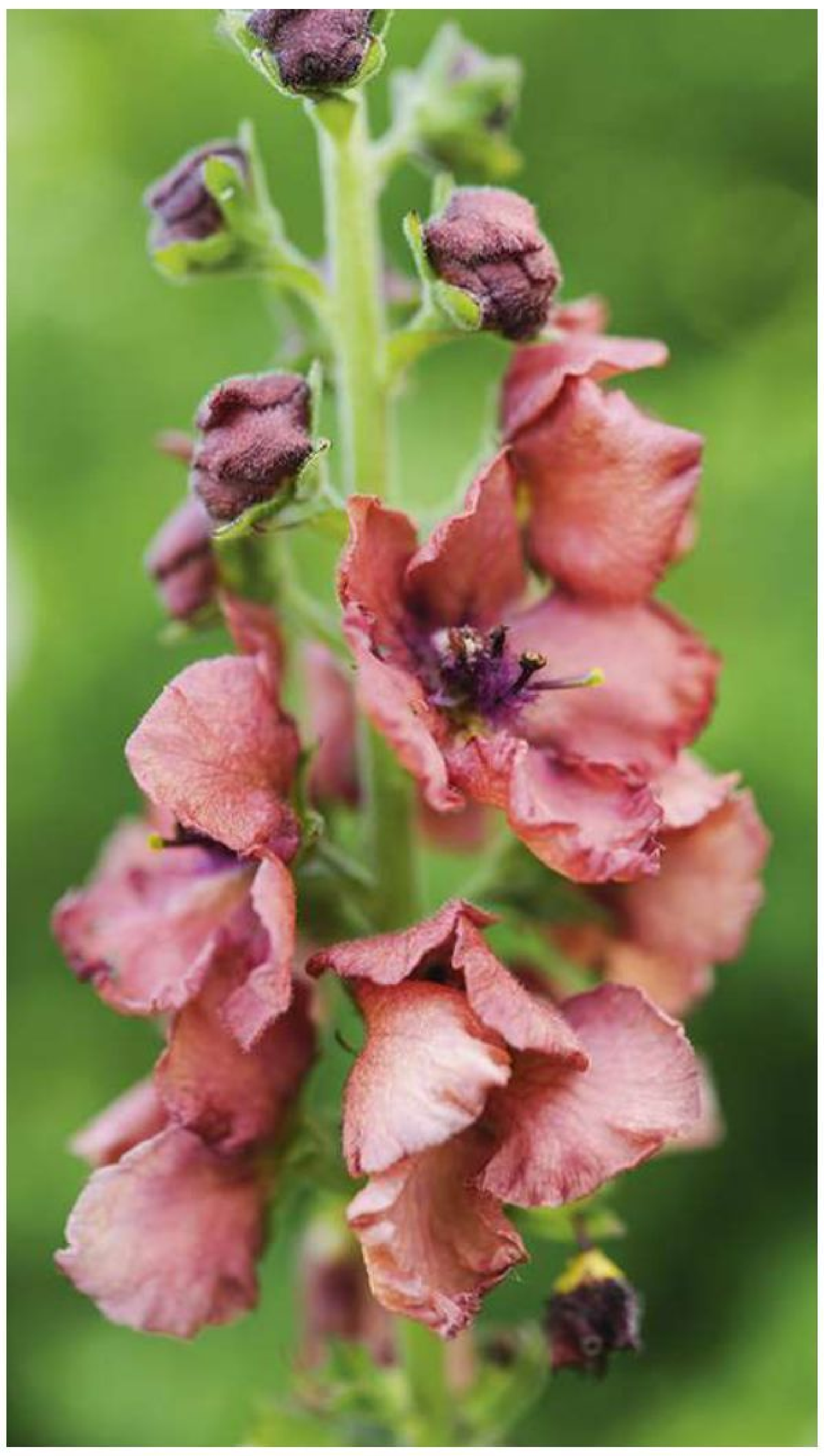
This plant has been one of my favourite hardy perennials since I started my first nursery more than 30 years ago. It is still one of my top ten plants as it exhibits great qualities throughout its growing season. Although a woodlander in its native country, I have found it performs best in full sun with a moisture-retentive soil. Pink shoots emerge in spring, its delicate white flowers are subtended by a showy red calyx, followed by beautiful seedheads, and the foliage turns crimson in autumn. What more could you ask for? AGM.

Height 60-90cm.
Origin Northeastern USA, Canada.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.
Season May to August. **MC**

JASON INGRAM

NODDING FLOWERS OPEN TO A PRISTINE WHITE WITH A CENTRAL BOSS OF YELLOW

PAEONIA VEITCHII 'ALBA'



JASON INGRAM

VERBASCUM 'PETRA'

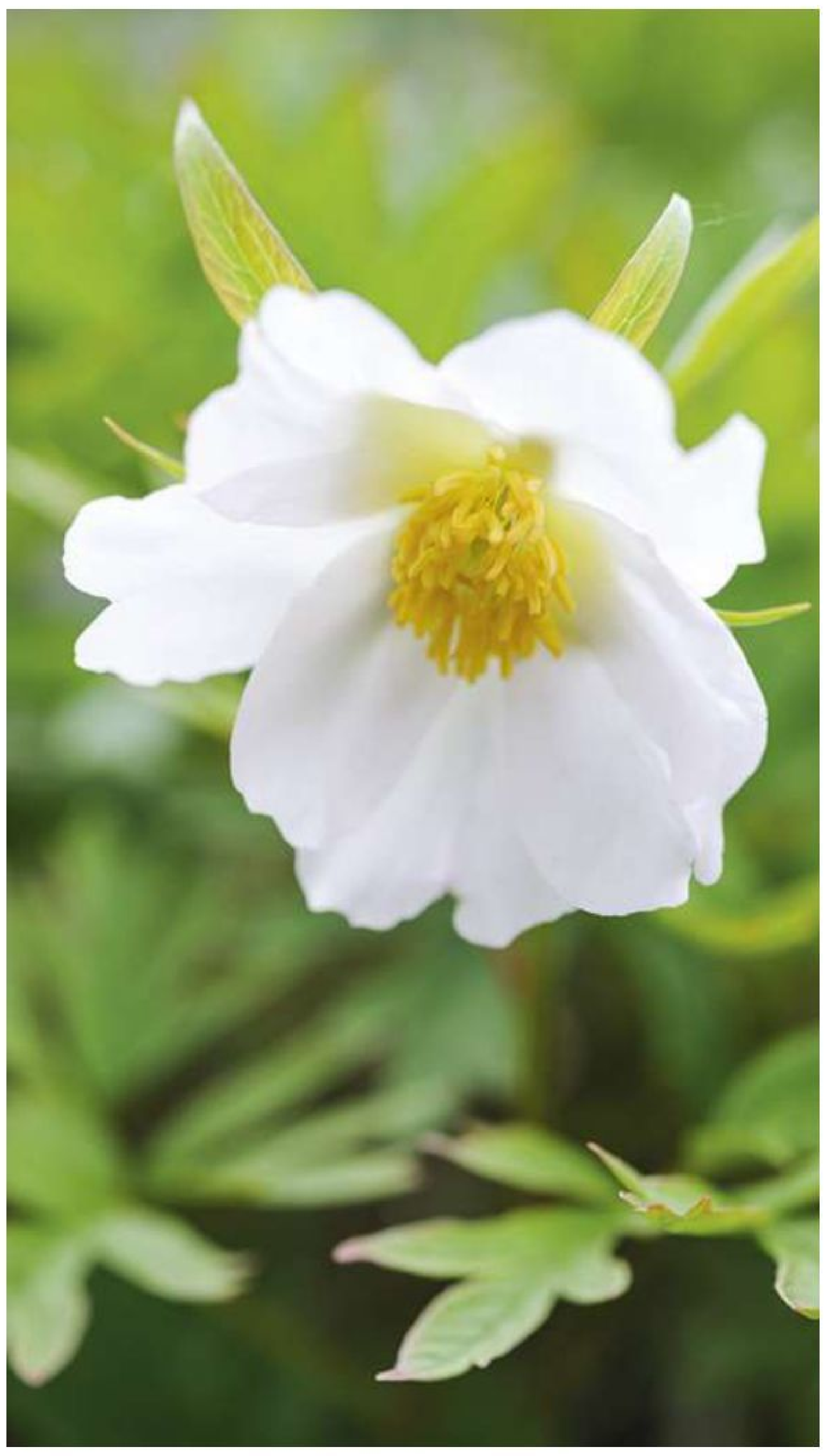
Mulleins have always been popular for their tall flower spikes, which provide useful vertical accents in the garden. Most are yellow with purple stamens or occasionally white. A few species, notably *Verbascum phoeniceum*, exhibit a colour range from white to purple. Hybridisation of *V. phoeniceum* and various perennial yellow species has resulted in some wonderful colour breaks. *V.* 'Petra' has unusual reddish-brown flowers and is one of several cultivars bred by Vic Johnstone and Claire Wilson, who formerly held the National Collection of *Verbascum*.

Height 1.2m.
Origin Garden hybrid.
Conditions Well-drained soil; lightly dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.
Season July. **MC**

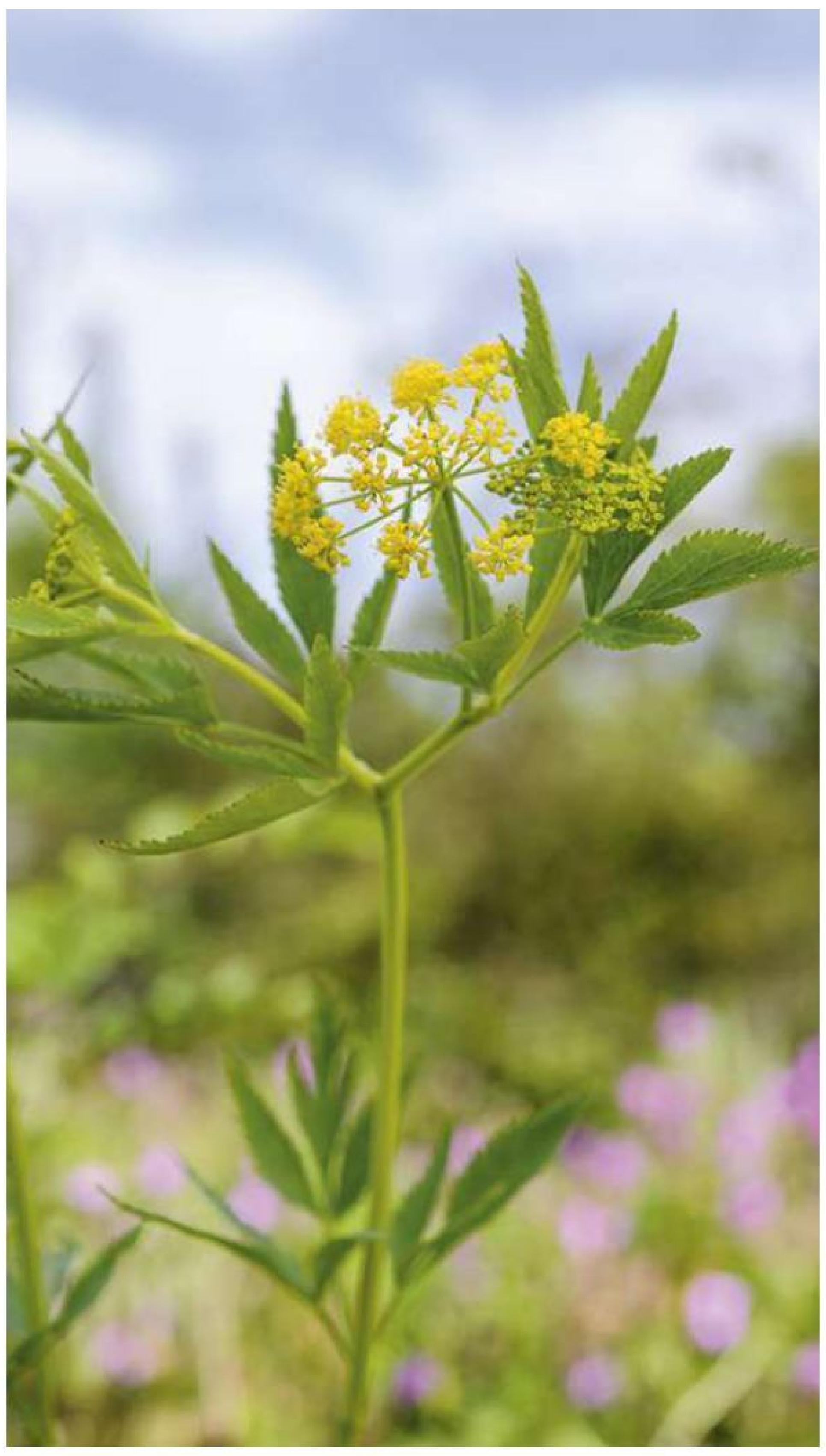
PAEONIA VEITCHII 'ALBA'

When I first became acquainted with this lovely peony, I was told that it was 'as rare as hen's teeth' and this still appears to be the case. In late spring, the deeply dissected foliage is a bronzy-green colour, maturing to deep green during the summer months. Tight green and pointed pendent buds appear at the end of flowering stems and as they develop, tightly rolled petals that are the palest-pink become evident. The slightly nodding flowers open to a pristine white with a central boss of yellow stamens emitting the most delicate, sweet fragrance.

Height 60-75cm.
Origin China.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil in sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.
Season June to July. **MC**



JASON INGRAM



JASON INGRAM

ZIZIA AUREA

My interest in the umbellifer family (*Apiaceae*) tempted me to try some of the North American species and *Zizia aurea* is one I have grown for several years. It has attractively dissected foliage and forms a rounded mound before it sends up sprays of small, yellow flowers in late spring and early summer. It is found in meadows and damp woods in its native habitat and appears relatively tolerant of most garden soil as long as it isn't too dry. Exhibited in recent show gardens at the Chelsea Flower Show, it is deservedly gaining more attention.

Height 60-90cm.
Origin Across Noth America, apart from in the southeast.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil in sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.
Season May to June. **MC**

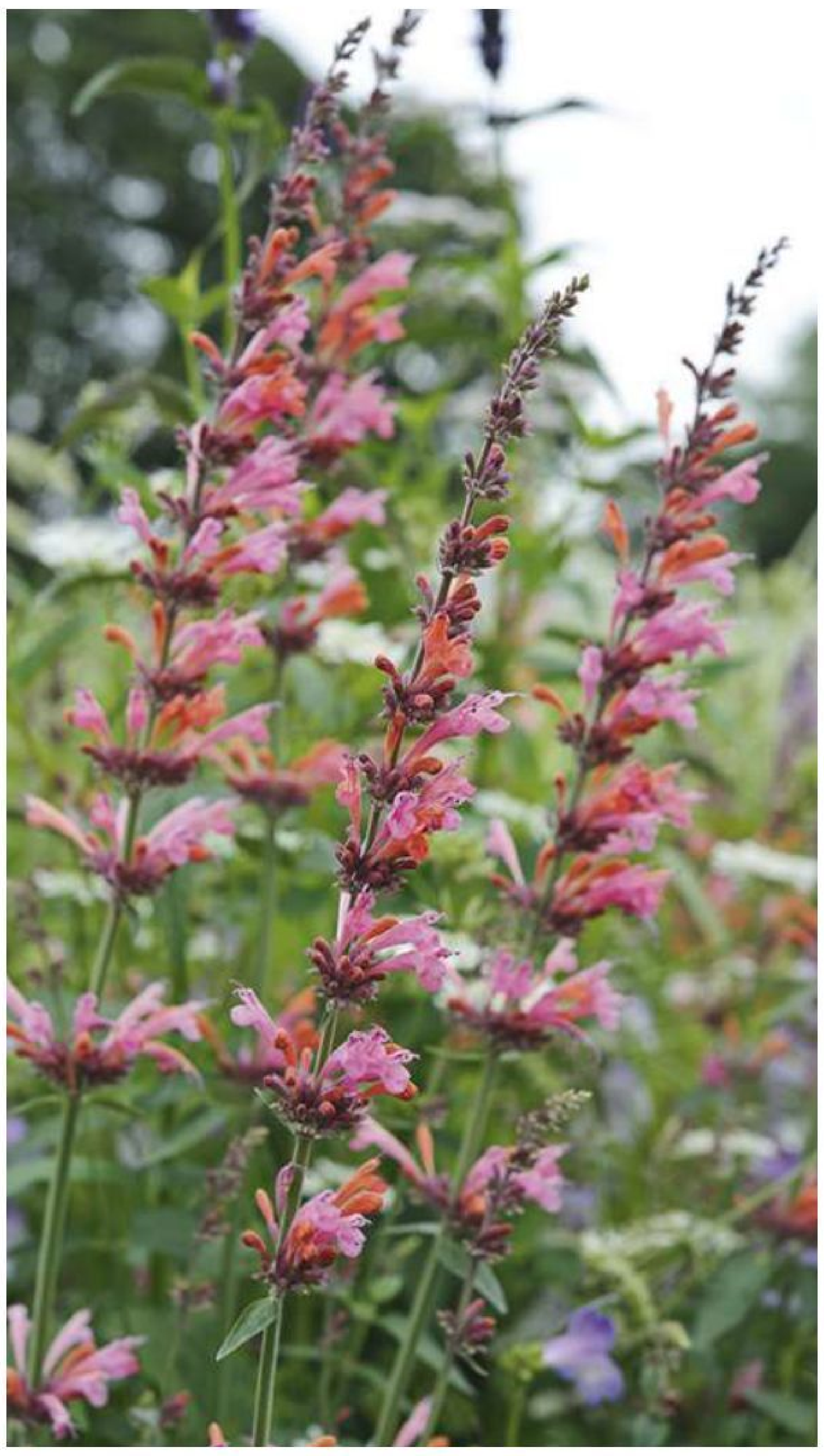
THE COLOUR IS GLORIOUS AND THE PEPPERMINT-SCENTED SPIKES ARE UPBEAT BUT NOT GAUDY

AGASTACHE 'PAINTED LADY'

AGASTACHE 'PAINTED LADY'

Had I been offered a plant described as 'a marriage of vivid pink and orange flowers', I might have declined. In this case, I'm glad I accepted, as the colour combination is glorious, proving that colour harmony is a matter of proportion. The peppermint-scented flower spikes are upbeat but not gaudy. They make a fine display all summer, and tone with pink or orange spectrums. A good choice for a pot where they will thrive in full sun and need little watering or deadheading.

Height 70cm.
Origin A selection of *Agastache mexicana* from hot, dry climates of southern North America.
Conditions Free-draining, warm soils. Protect from winter wet.
Hardiness USDA 6a-9b.
Season Early June to September. **CM**



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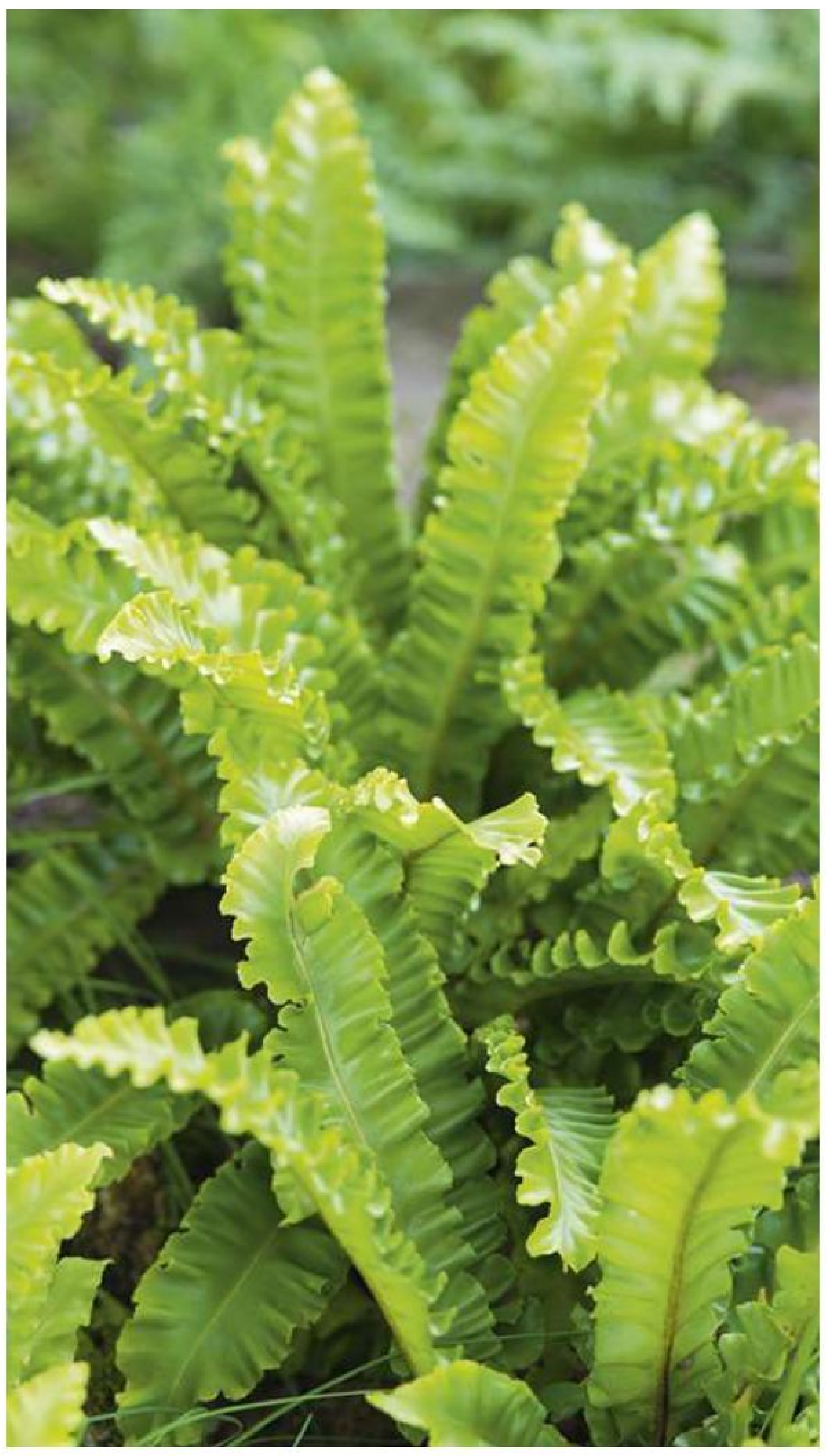


MAAYKE DE RIDDER

ASPLENIUM SCOLOPENDRIUM 'CRISPUM BOLTON'S NOBILE'

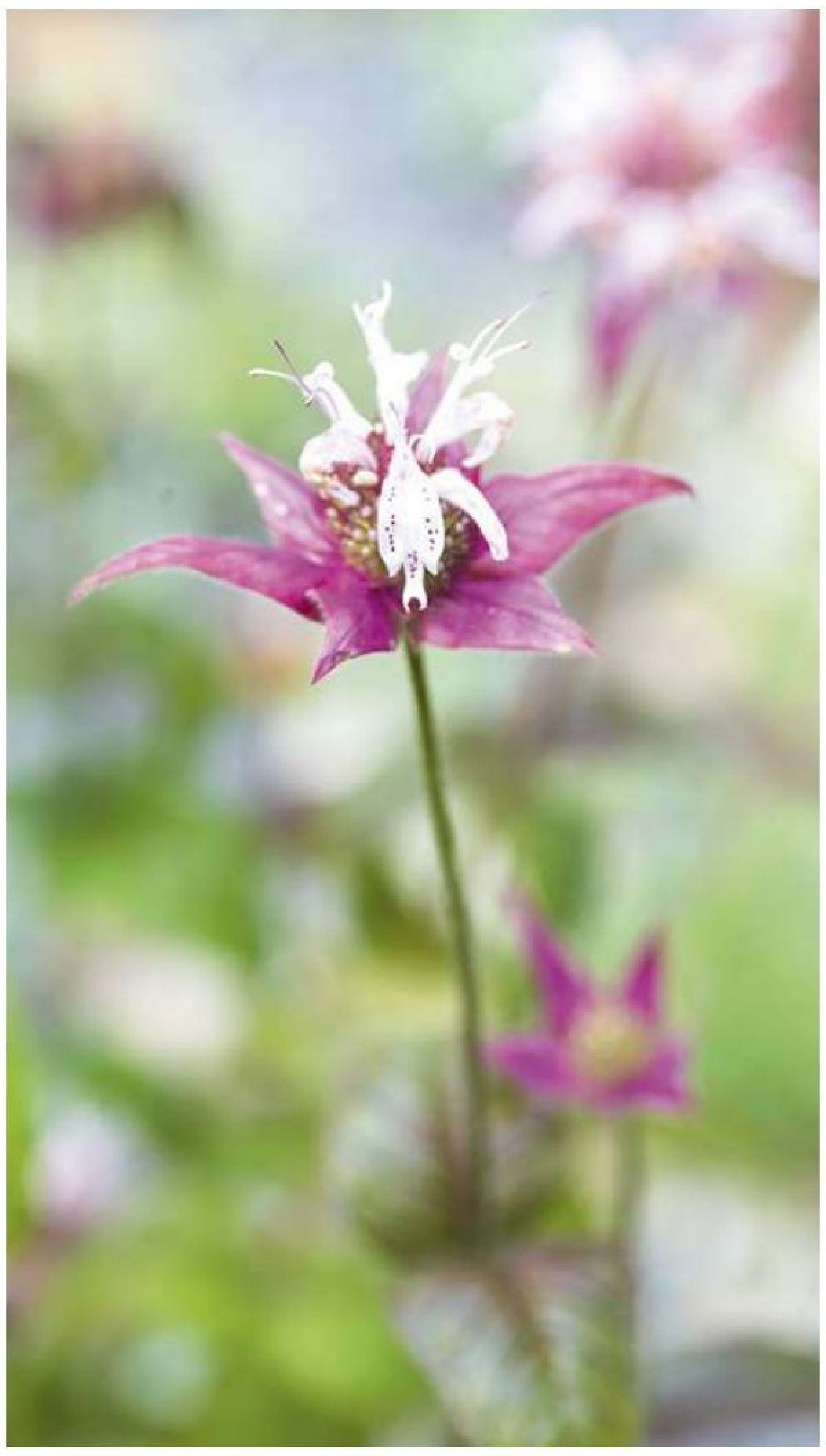
The hart's tongue fern, with its dark, evergreen, deeply frilled fronds, is one of the most distinctive native ferns and very easy to distinguish from other ferns. I prefer its old name of *Phyllitis scolopendrium*, which is how I discovered this beautiful plant more than 30 years ago in Reginald Kaye's nursery in Lancashire. I bought a splendid specimen there in 1981 and it is still growing in my garden.

Height 60cm.
Origin Europe, North America, Asia.
Conditions Typically likes an alkaline soil, but will tolerate an acidic soil in shade or sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.
Season All year round. **HK**

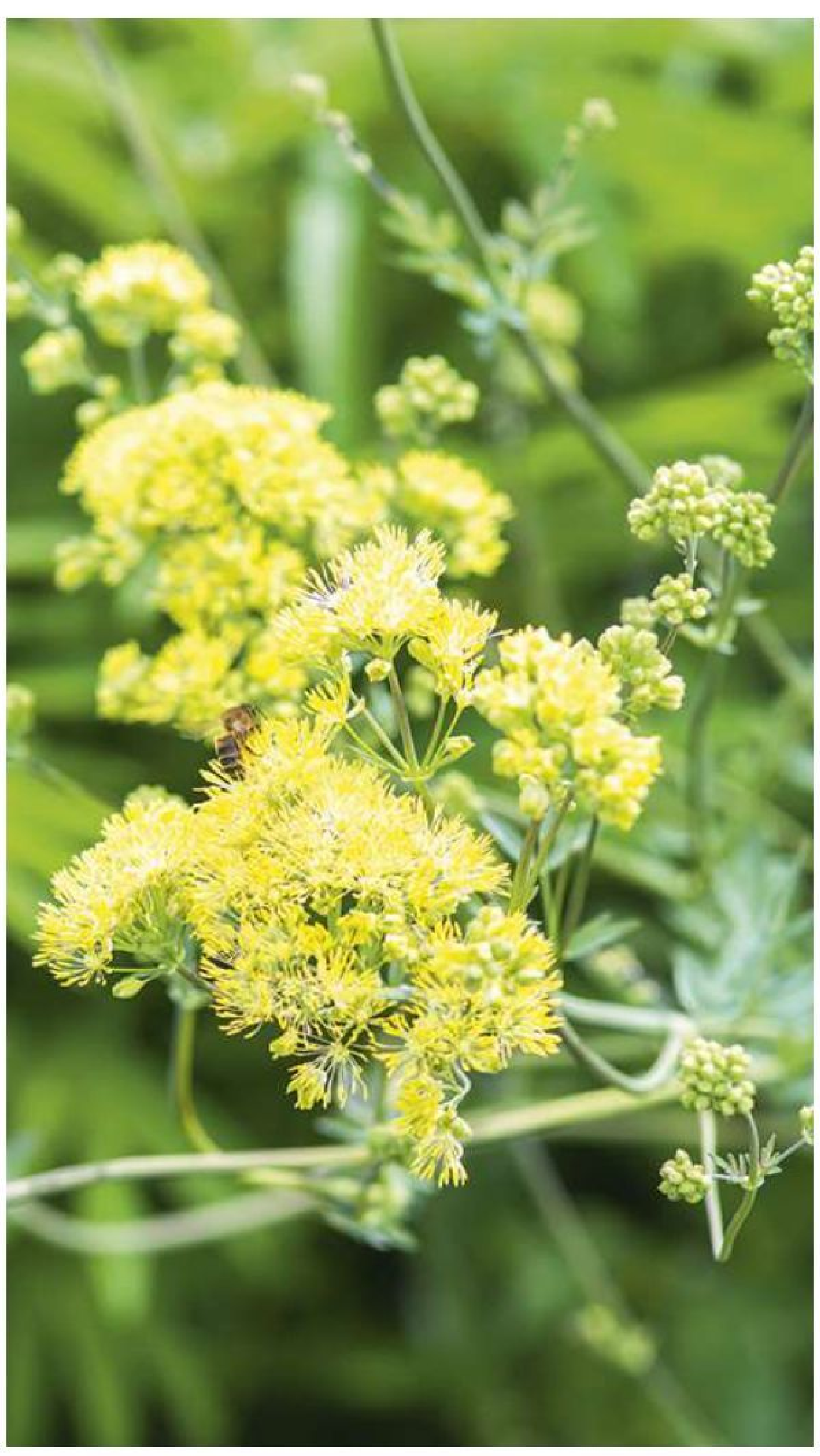
MONARDA BRADBURIANA

In spring this fantastic plant has thick, purplish-pink leaves, with dark-purple veins. In May the buds appear and in early June the first light-pink flowers open. The flowers are large for such a short plant and sit within dark purplish bracts. We would like to breed some other colours, but all our 500 seedlings retained the same light-pink colour, which in fact is the best companion to its purple bracts. This plant will not suffer from mildew, and in autumn when the purplish leaves darken it is especially attractive. Flowers are attractive to bees and butterflies.

Height 60cm.
Origin Southeastern USA.
Conditions Sun; can stand more drought than normal *Monarda* hybrids.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.
Season May to July. **HK**



MAAYKE DE RIDDER



MAAYKE DE RIDDER

THALICTRUM SPECIES

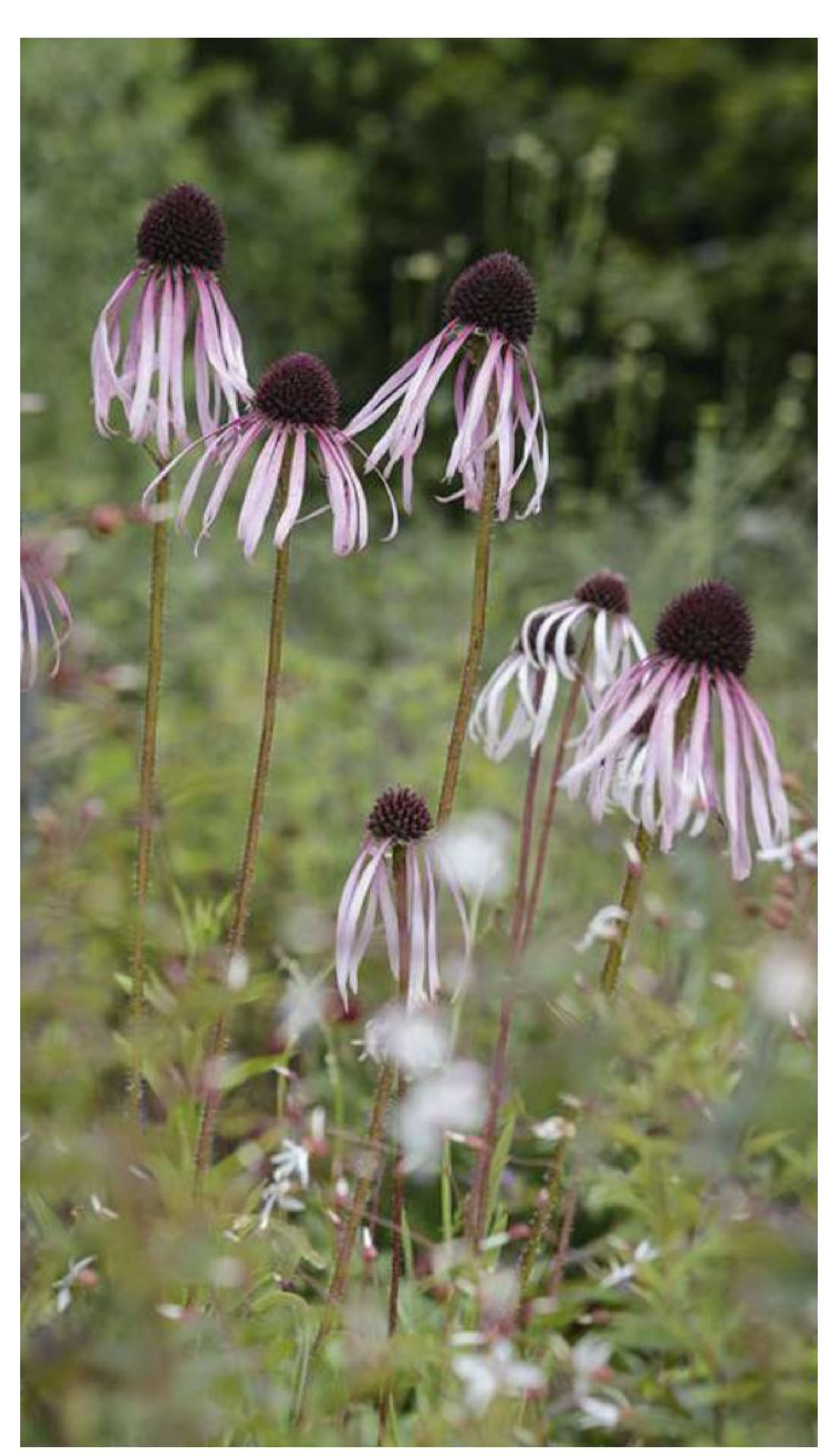
This must be our best yellow-flowered meadow rue. For years we've grown *Thalictrum flavum* subsp. *glaucum*, but this plant, sometimes sold as the invalid species sphaerostachyum, is superlative. The foliage is much bluer, with strong, upright, flowering stems. The umbels are made up of small, light-yellow flowers without petals, which give an almost creamy effect. Bees are attracted to it because of the multitude of stamens producing golden pollen. Except in really windy areas, it needs no staking, and it combines very well with the blue baptisia.

Height 1.5m.
Origin Unknown.
Conditions Full sun to part shade in a fertile soil that is not too dry.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season June to August. **HK**

ECHINACEA PALLIDA

Great swathes of echinaceas are familiar subjects for naturalistic-style gardens and are a magnet for bees and other pollinating insects. The one most often seen is *E. purpurea*, with stiff, almost horizontal, rosy-purple, pink or white rays and a conspicuous brown or green central cone. Altogether more understated, and to my eye more elegant, is *E. pallida*, which has slender, reflexed petals that are usually pale pink, deepening in colour towards the prominent brownish cone. The flowering stems tend to be strong and wiry with the blooms bobbing about in the breeze.

Height 1.2m.
Origin Eastern USA.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-10b.
Season Summer. **MC**



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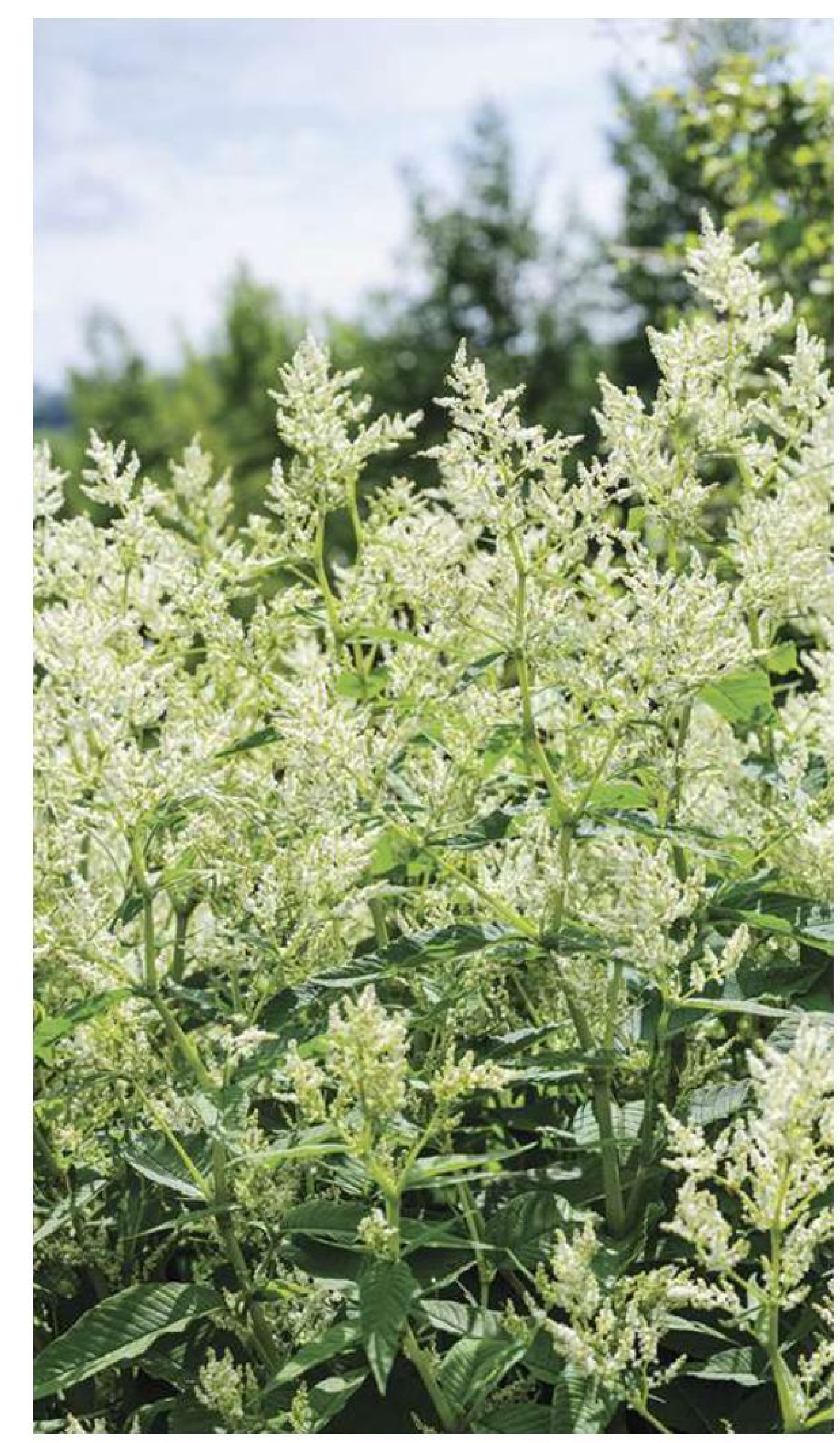


JASON INGRAM

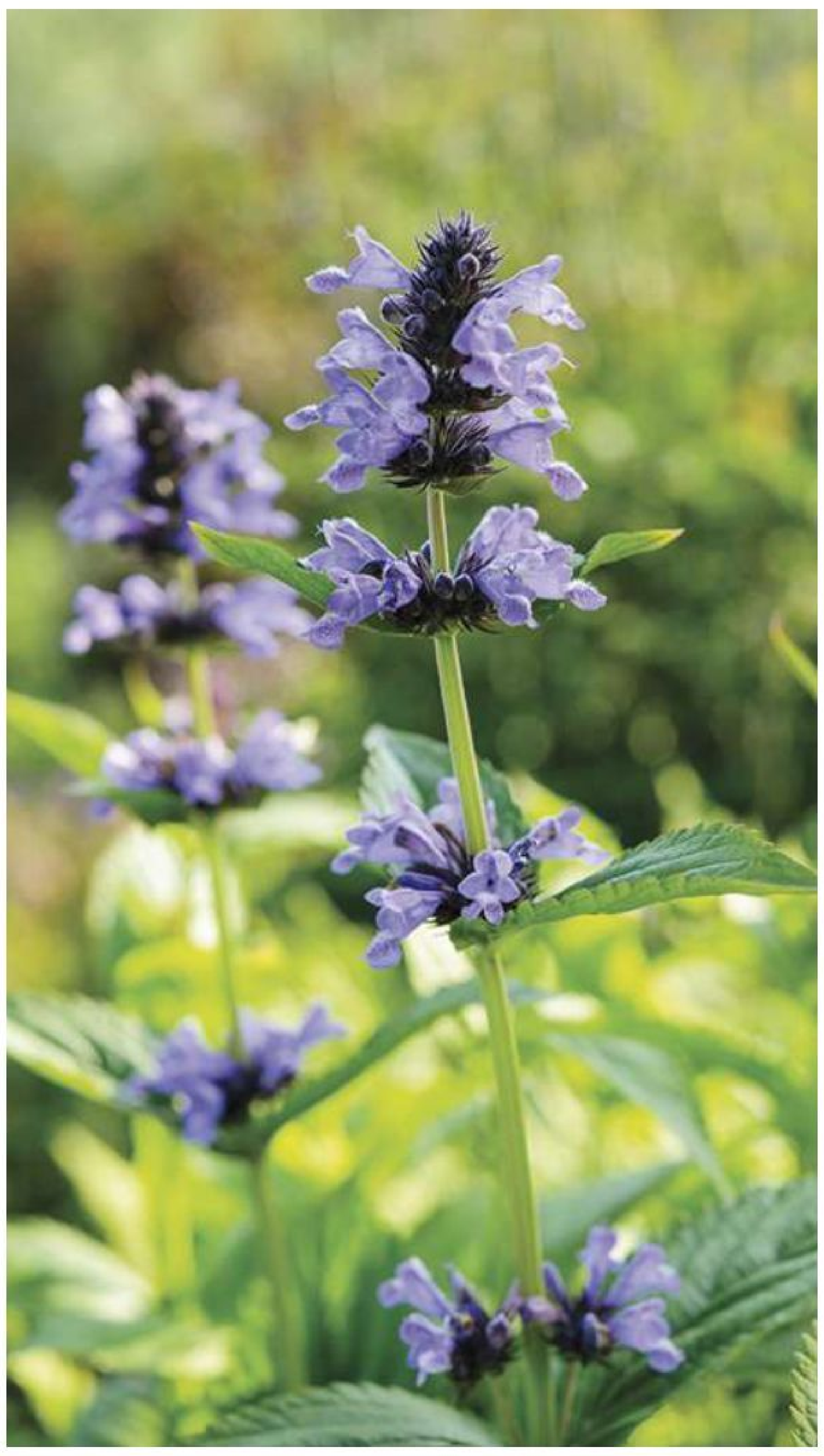
PERSICARIA X FENNICA

The giant, white-fleece flower, known by many as *Persicaria polymorpha*, looks like a huge, creamy-white cloud of froth that has just settled on the garden. In bloom from June to October, the fluffy plumes of flower slowly change from white to beige and then eventually to pink. The sturdy, bamboo-like stems gradually bow outwards under the weight of flowers until the plant reaches about 2.5m across. It looks frighteningly vigorous, and takes up a lot of room in the garden, but it is not invasive, increasing in size only slowly.

Height 2m.
Origin Hybrid origin with *P. alpina*.
Conditions Sun or part shade; any reasonable soil.
Hardiness USDA 4a-9b.
Season June to October. **DW**

CLUSTERS OF PILLAR-BOX RED FLOWERS ARE PRODUCED REPEATEDLY OVER SUMMER

ROSA 'FLORENCE MARY MORSE'



JASON INGRAM

NEPETA KUBANICA

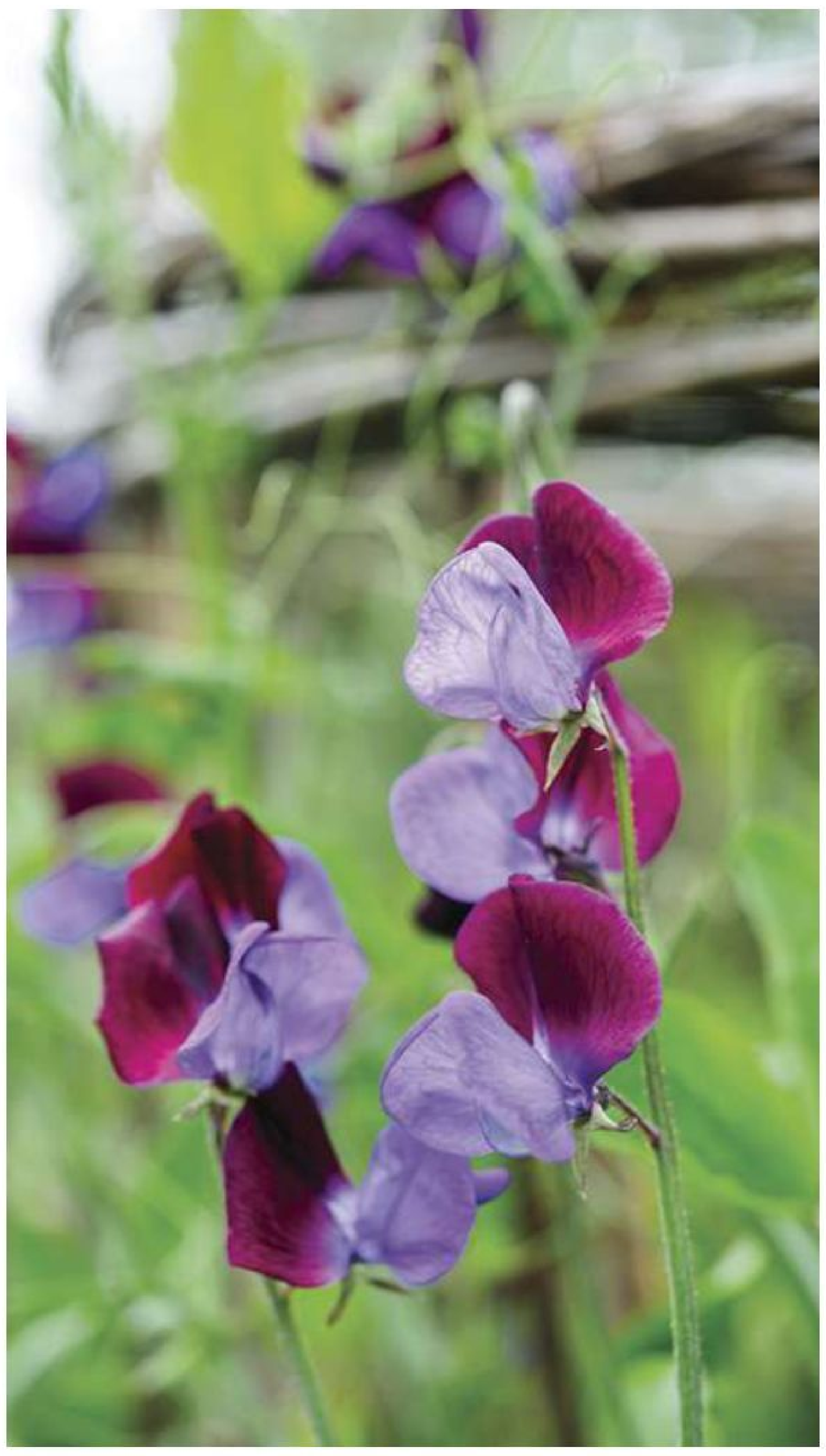
Nepeta cataria is an addictive drug for cats. *Nepeta kubanica*, on the other hand, does not interest cats, but is addictive for me. It is a giant nepeta, standing 1.2m tall, with substantial, solid-looking, 45cm-flower spikes carried on dark stems. Blue flowers emerge from the darkest of blue buds and almost black calyxes in tight whorls. A show-stopping plant when in full flower. The leaves have the usual good minty nepeta smell, and the substantial seedheads stand well into winter. De Hessenhof, my favourite Dutch nursery, gave me this plant a few years ago and it is magnificent.

Height 1.2m.
Origin Central Europe, Caucasus.
Conditions Sun and good drainage.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.
Season June to September. **DW**

LATHYRUS ODORATUS 'MATUCANA'

This is the sweetest smelling of all the sweet peas. *Lathyrus odoratus* 'Matucana' closely resembles the original sweet pea introduced by Francesco Cupani in 1699, but it has four rather than two flowers per stem and they are slightly bigger. Both have deep-magenta upper petals and purple-blue lower petals. A hardy annual, it is best sown in October and kept under cover without heat until March. It can be sown in February or March but will never get as big or produce as many flowers. In a good year I need a step ladder to pick the flowers from plants sown in autumn. AGM.

Height 2m.
Origin Sicily.
Conditions Full sun, not too dry.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 2a-11.
Season June to September. **DW**



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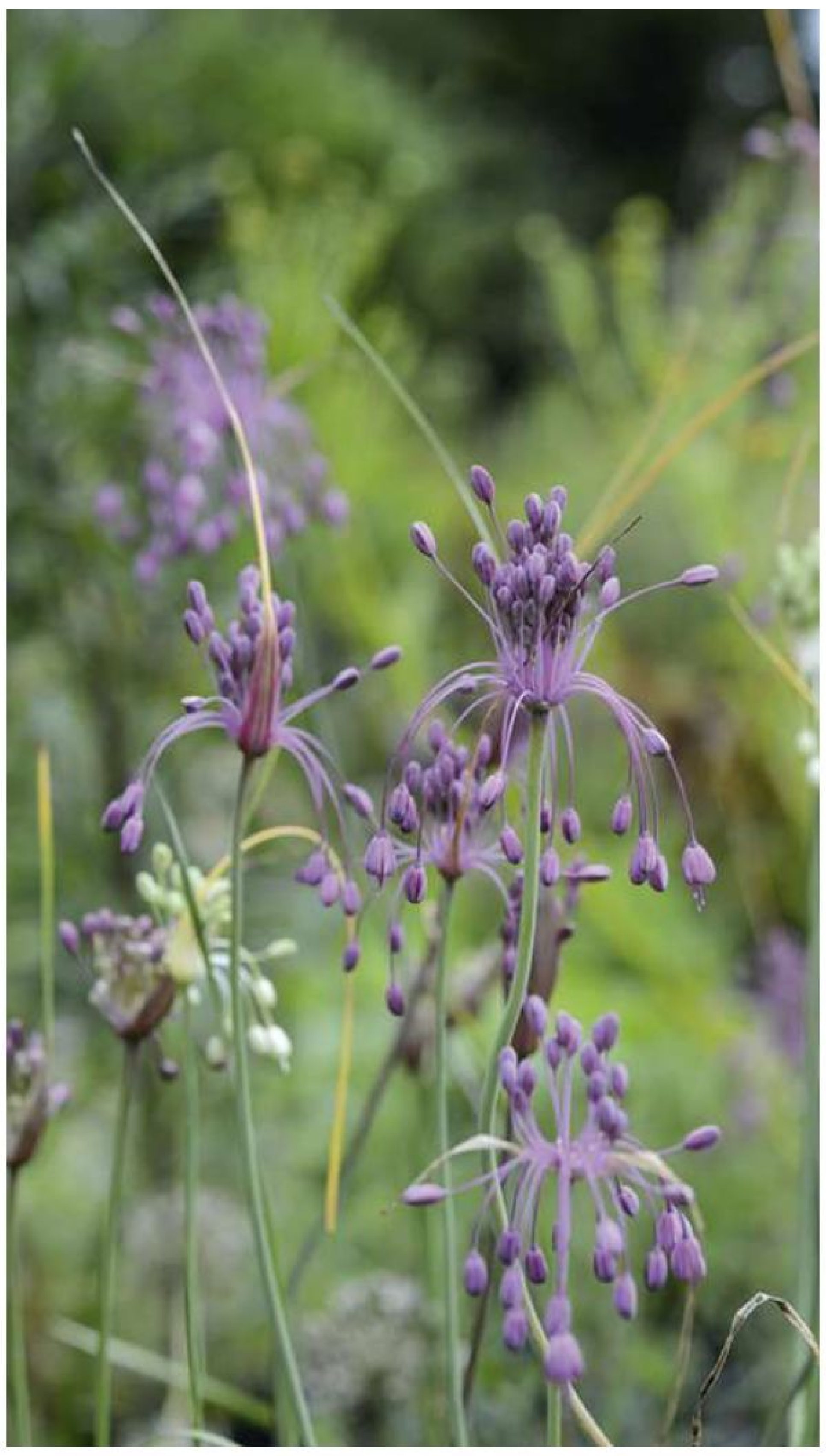


JASON INGRAM

ALLIUM CARINATUM SUBSP. *PULCHELLUM*

Ornamental alliums usually conjure up the big, bold and brazen purple, rose or white drumstick-types, which are so prominent in gardens in late May and early June. *Allium carinatum* subsp. *pulchellum* is more subtle, however, flowering later in the year but still attracting bees and other pollinators with copious nectar. The flowerheads start off upright and as they open the individual flowers hang down until they look like a brilliant firework. Once pollinated, they return to the vertical and produce lots of black seeds. AGM.

Height 30-40cm.
Origin Central and southern Europe, Russia and Turkey.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 3a-9b.
Season July and August. **MC**

SHARON PEARSON

ROSA 'FLORENCE MARY MORSE'

This rose was bred in 1951 by Reimer Kordes, a German breeder who was also responsible for 'Iceberg', one of the most successful roses of all time. This one has raggedy, somewhat messy, open-centred, semi-double flowers, and lacks the heavenly scent expected of old roses. Nevertheless, it more than makes up for its flaws with abundant clusters of rich pillarbox-red flowers produced repeatedly over the summer and autumn. Slightly stiff in habit, it mixes well with other ingredients and in Great Dixter's famous Long Border, it is the only permanent plant to be repeated four times – a true testament to its qualities.

Height 2m.
Origins W Kordes & Sons. A cross between 'Chateau' and 'Magnifica'.
Conditions Best in full sun in good soil.
Hardiness USDA 4b-10b.
Season June to November. **FG**

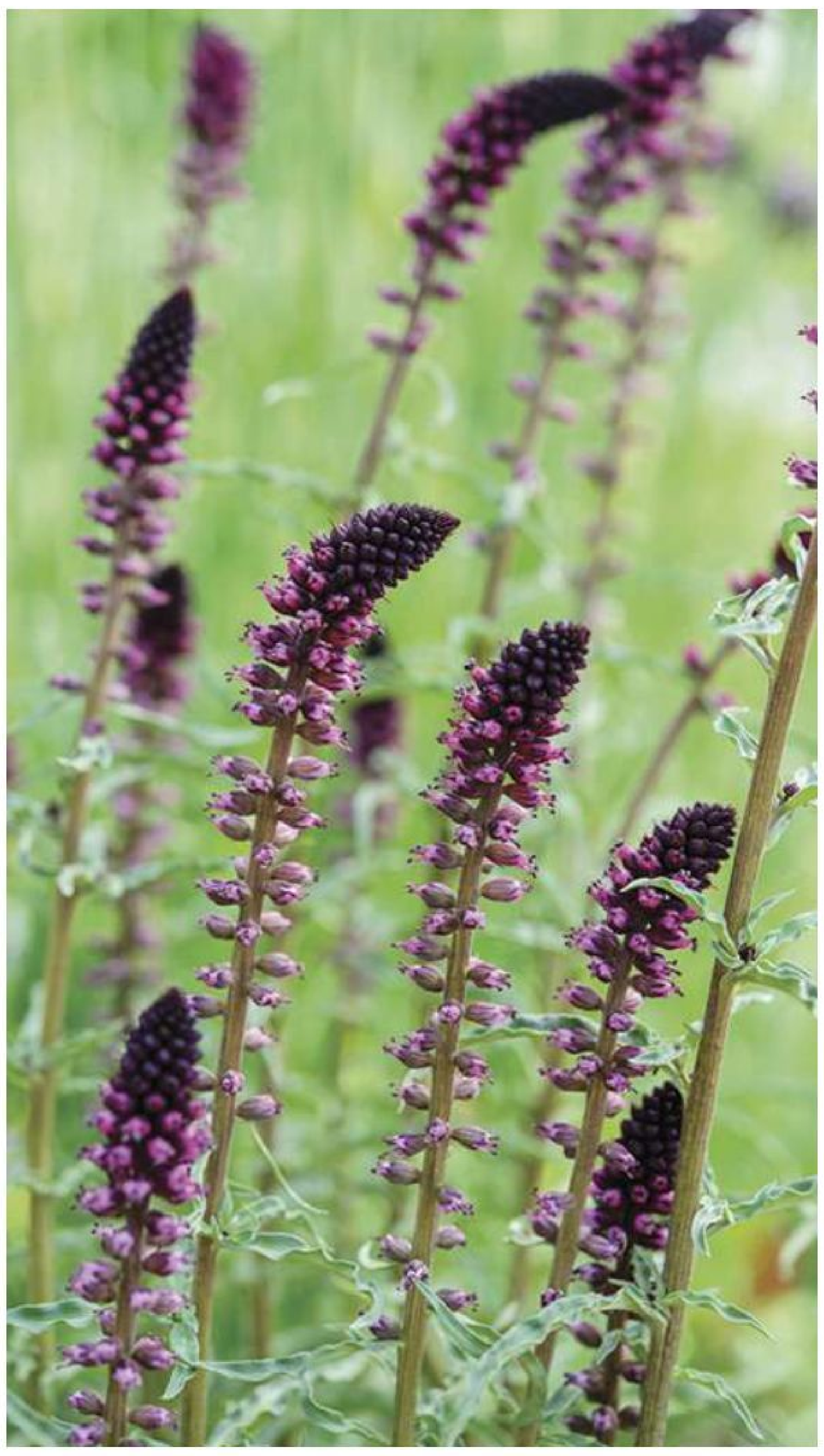
ITS SWEET SMELL IS REDOLENT OF POACHED PLUMS AND CONJURES UP THE SUMMER KITCHEN

IRIS GRAMINEA

LYSIMACHIA ATROPURPUREA

Pewter-coloured leaves and serpentine stems support the small, deep-purple flowers. As they age, the stems twist and turn, forming slight, grotesque parodies of ladies admiring themselves in a mirror. It is said to be perennial, but I have always found it to be biennial, never surviving its first real flowering. As I like the silvery rosette of leaves in the first year, however, and love the self-congratulatory arching flowering stems in the second, I am willing to sow it every year. Oddly, for a biennial, it never self-seeds. How on earth does it expect to survive?

Height 50-60cm.
Origin Balkans, Turkey.
Conditions Soil that's not too dry in sun.
Hardiness USDA 4a-9b.
Season June to August. **DW**



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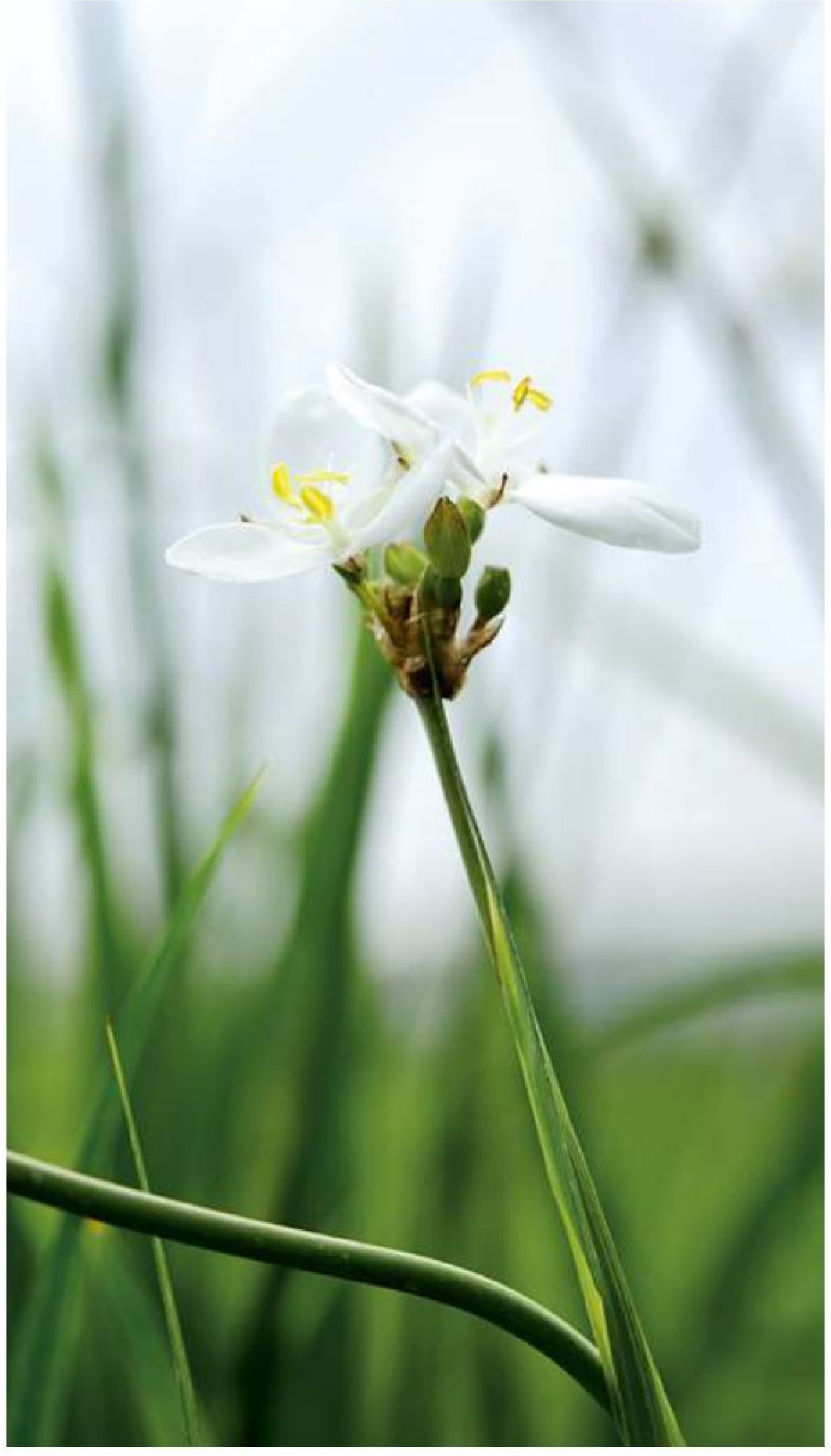


JASON INGRAM

LIBERTIA CHILENSIS

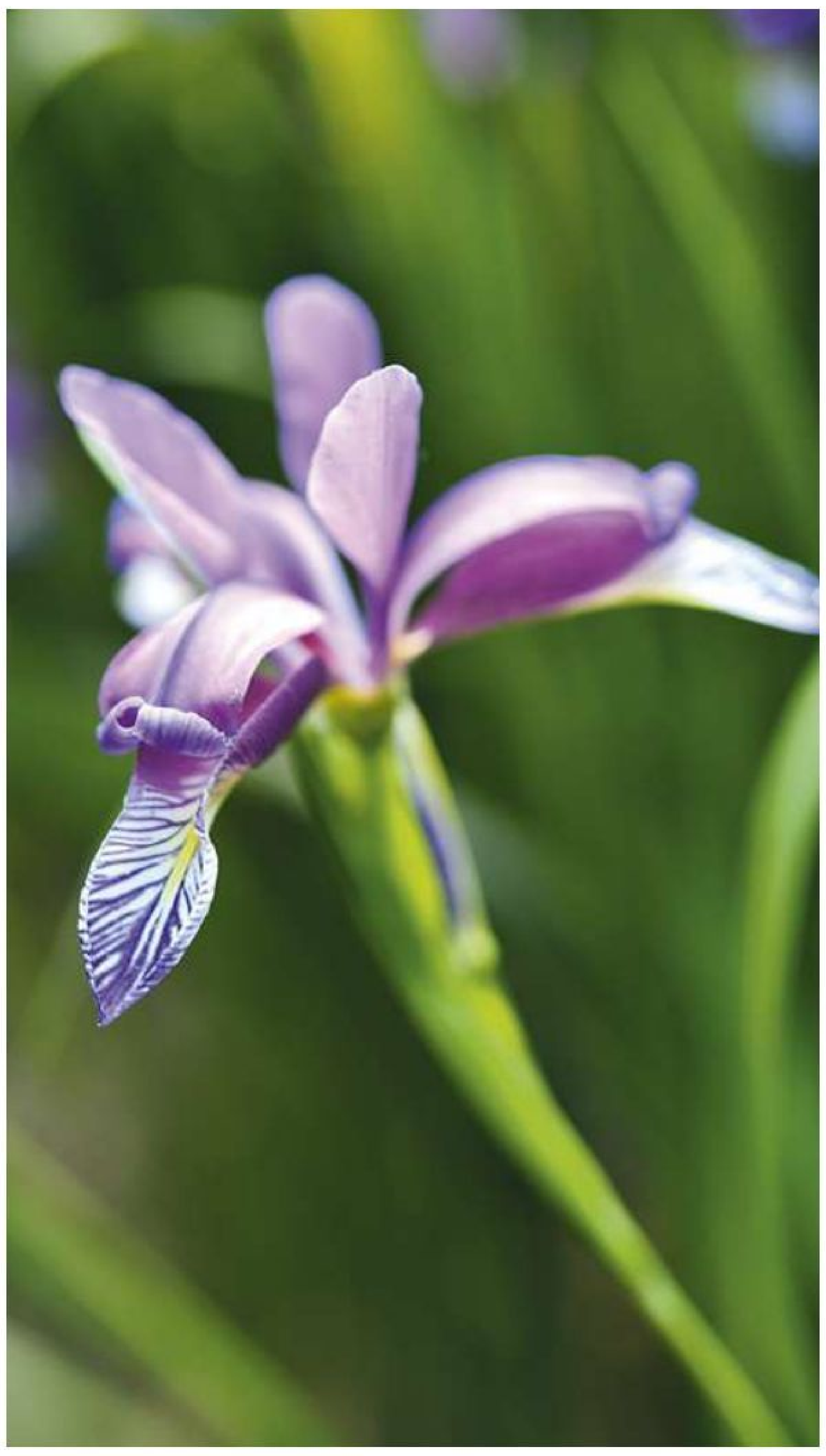
This plant is reliable and undemanding, while making a generous contribution to formal and informal assemblies. Even before the flowers appear, the slender sword-like foliage, arranged in fans, adds vertical definition to a scheme, provided you keep slugs and snails from decimating it. Arching flower stems bow down under the weight of startling white terminal flower clusters and give a lightened elegance to woodland scenes. Later, golden-brown seedpods provide additional layers of interest. AGM.

Height 85cm.
Origin From stream banks and open woodlands in Chile and Argentina.
Conditions Humus-rich, fertile soil.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 8a-11.
Season Flowers during May and June, with seedheads and foliage extending the interest much longer. **CM**

IRIS GRAMINEA

This plant has earned itself the common epithet the plum tart iris since the flowers exude a curious sweet smell that is redolent of poached plums. The scent really conjures up a summer kitchen. This is a small and charming iris with slender flowers whose colouring is a rich vignette of purples and mauve, enhanced by a characteristic metallic sheen. The flowers have three large, spreading, pendent fall petals, which are white and strongly veined with violet. AGM.

Height 25cm.
Origin Native to grassy places and open woods from Spain to Caucasus.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil, preferring dappled shade in order to flower and to thrive.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 3b-9a.
Season Flowers May to June. **CM**



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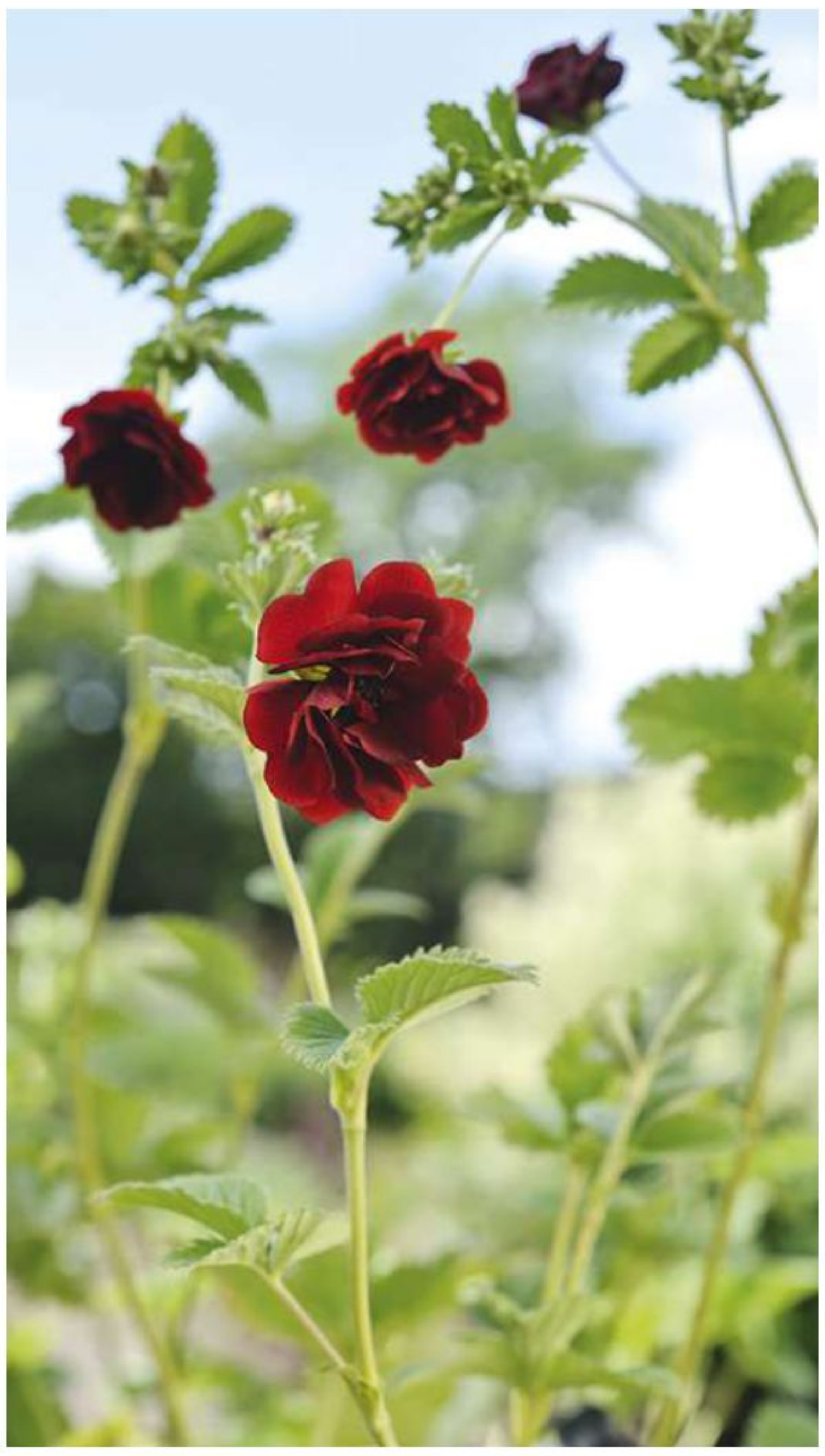


JASON INGRAM

POTENTILLA 'VOLCAN'

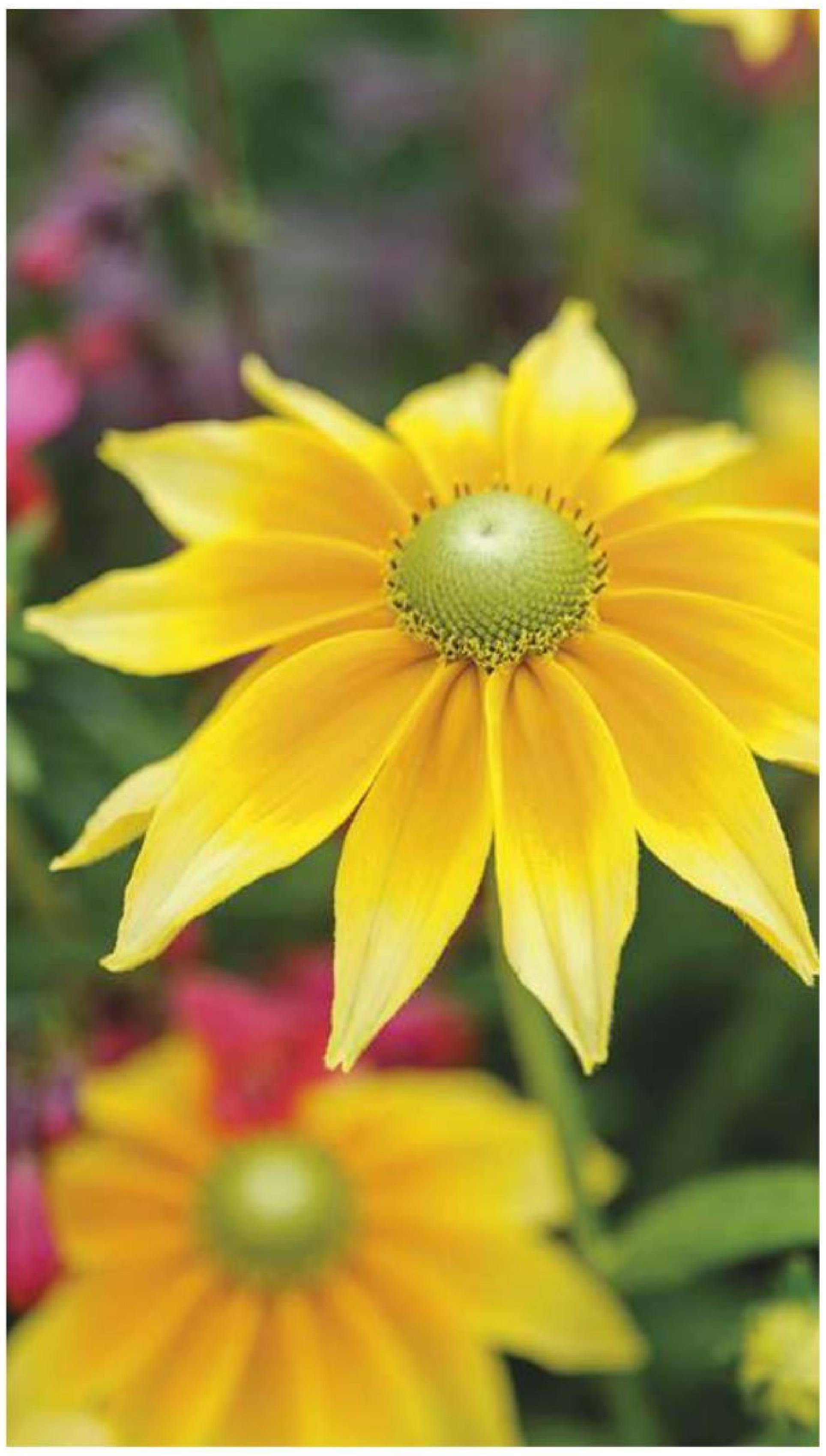
This deep, blood red has to be one of my favourite ways of giving a dash of excitement to a sober composition. With their velvety texture and rich, deep hue, the flowers of *Potentilla* 'Volcan' will scramble through branches of adjacent plants in their quest for light. It is particularly good with *Salvia verticillata* 'Purple Rain' and *Nepeta racemosa* 'Blue Wonder' to give a rich Persian carpet effect. The display lasts longer than many of the other herbaceous potentilla and this plant requires little attention.

Height 45cm.
Origin A hybrid of *Potentilla atrosanguinea* from high-altitude scrub between Sikkim and Afghanistan.
Conditions Most free-draining garden loams in a sunny position.
Hardiness USDA 5a-9b.
Season June to July. **CM**

RUDBECKIA HIRTA 'PRAIRIE SUN'

This *Rudbeckia* has huge, sumptuous, yellow flowers, each with a striking green central cone. It can be grown as either an annual or a biennial, and will bloom all summer, continuing to produce a succession of flowers well into autumn. If sown early in the year, it will flower from August, but I prefer to sow seed in July, over-winter the plants in a frame, and grow them on through the spring. I then have fat plants to put out in June, which will flower from July onwards. Grow alongside reds, perhaps *Salvia coccinea*, or white anemones, depending on your taste.

Height 80cm.
Origin Garden origin, from North America.
Conditions Rich soil in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 3a-8b.
Season July to September. **MR**



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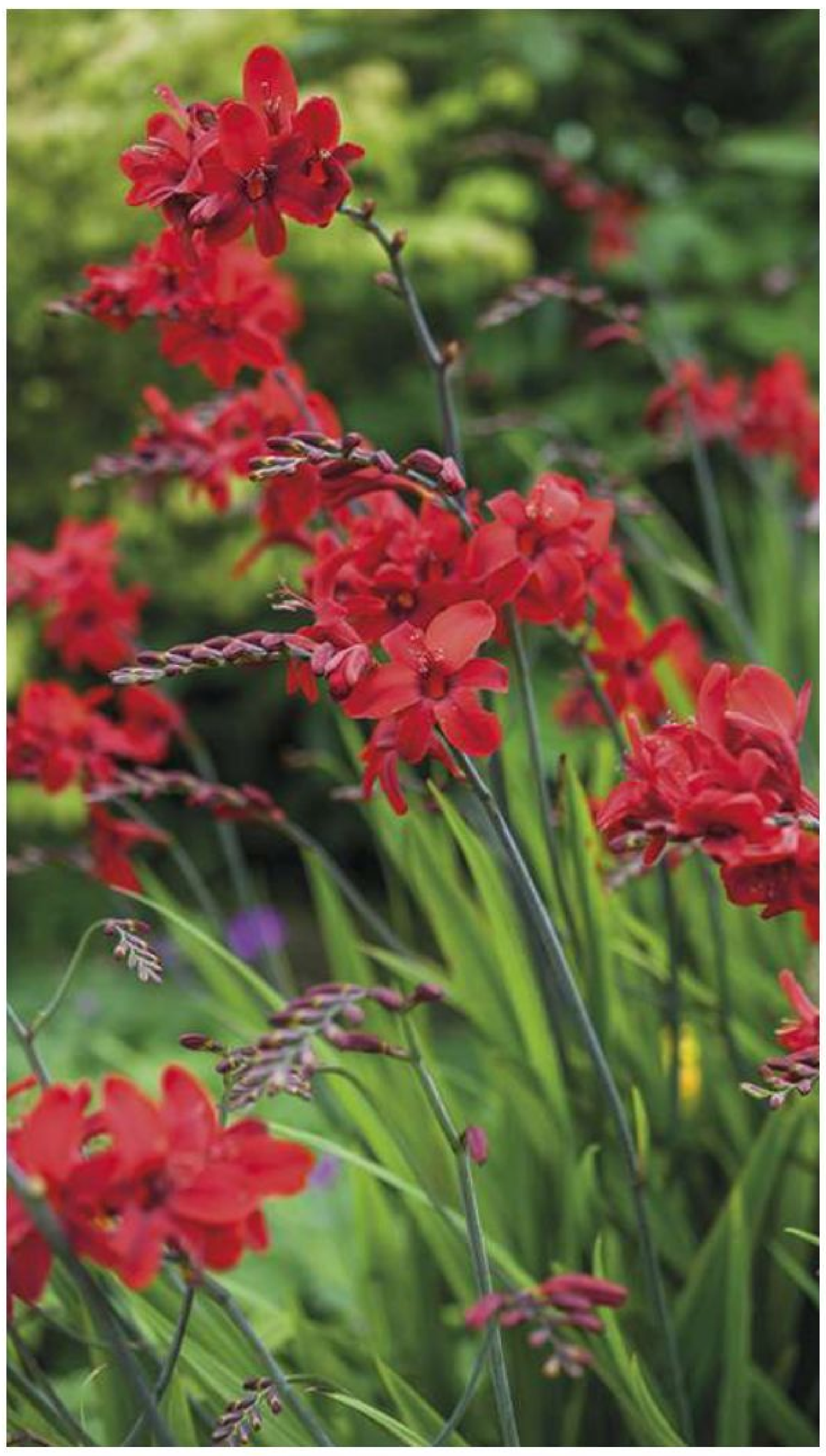


JASON INGRAM

CROCOSMIA 'HELLFIRE'

The renowned *Crocosmia* 'Lucifer' used to be my default red crocosmia for the garden, but it has now been usurped by the brilliant 'Hellfire'. The flowers of 'Hellfire' are a dusky, deep red and larger than those of 'Lucifer', which look orange in comparison. The blooms are held on dark stems and seem to peer out from above the masses of vivid-green, sword-shaped leaves. Plant in good, moist soil at the front of the border as the foliage provides good contrast against lower-growing plants and remains clean until autumn. Divide the corms every four years to maintain vigour. AGM.

Height 1.2m.
Origin Garden origin, from South Africa.
Conditions Moist, open garden soil in sun to partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-10b.
Season June to August. **MR**

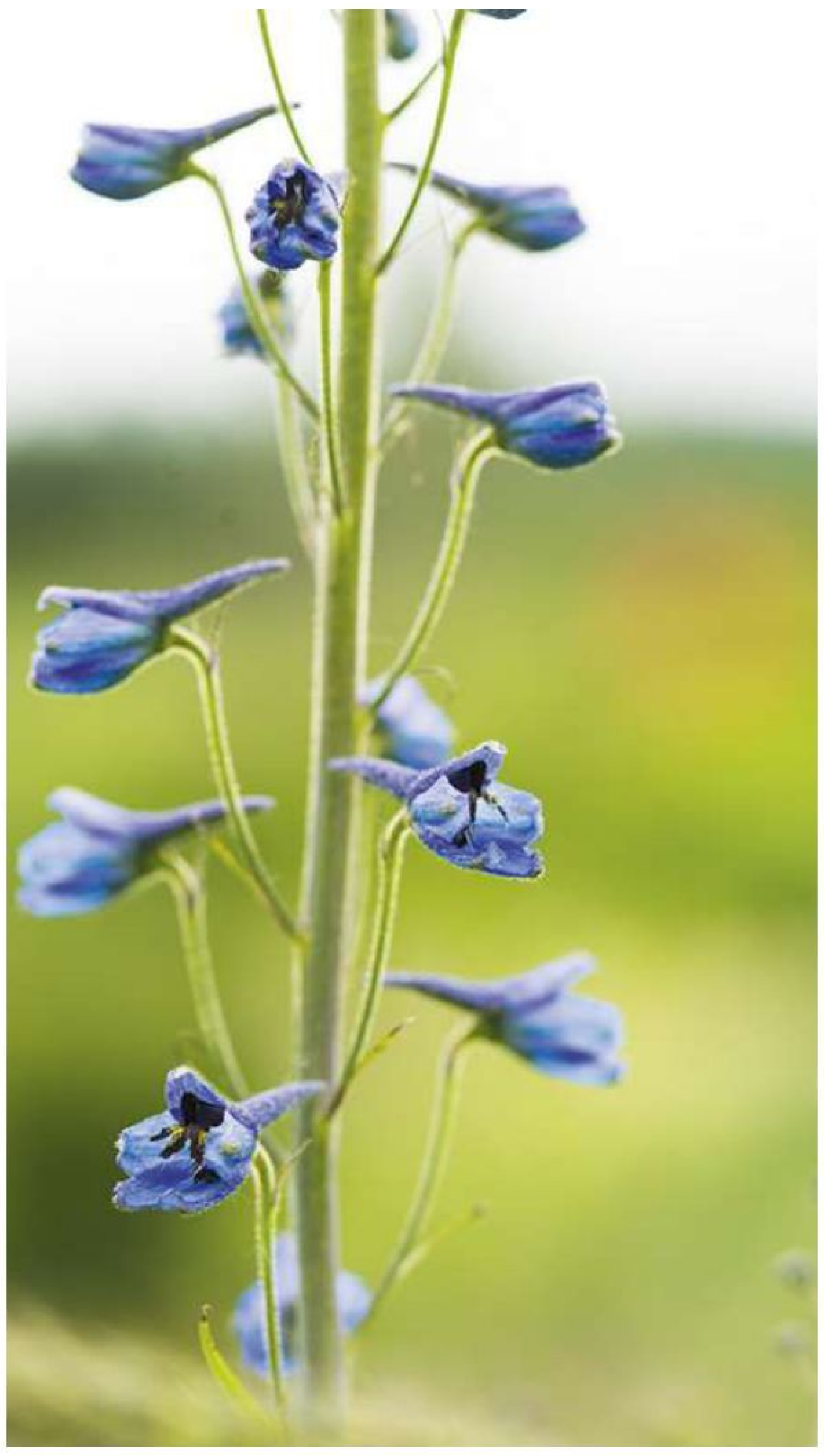
MAAYKE DE RIDDER

SILPHIUM MOHRII

With so many yellow composites flowering in summer and autumn, do we need another one? In this case yes, because this is a real discovery – I find it incomprehensible that this noble plant was not discovered for our gardens earlier. The big, bristly, lance-shaped foliage, although handsome, doesn't give away the beauty of the plant, but as soon as the first large, disc flowers open, everybody starts to ask about it. The flowers are up to 8cm across in a beautiful lemon-yellow colour. The show goes on until the first frost. It is also the smallest silphium we grow here in the nursery.

Height 1.3m.
Origin Southeast USA.
Conditions Best in poor soil in sun.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season August to September. **HK**

> WHEN THE FIRST LARGE, DISC FLOWERS OPEN, EVERYONE STARTS TO ASK ABOUT IT
>
> *SILPHIUM MOHRII*



MAAYKE DE RIDDER

DELPHINIUM ELATUM

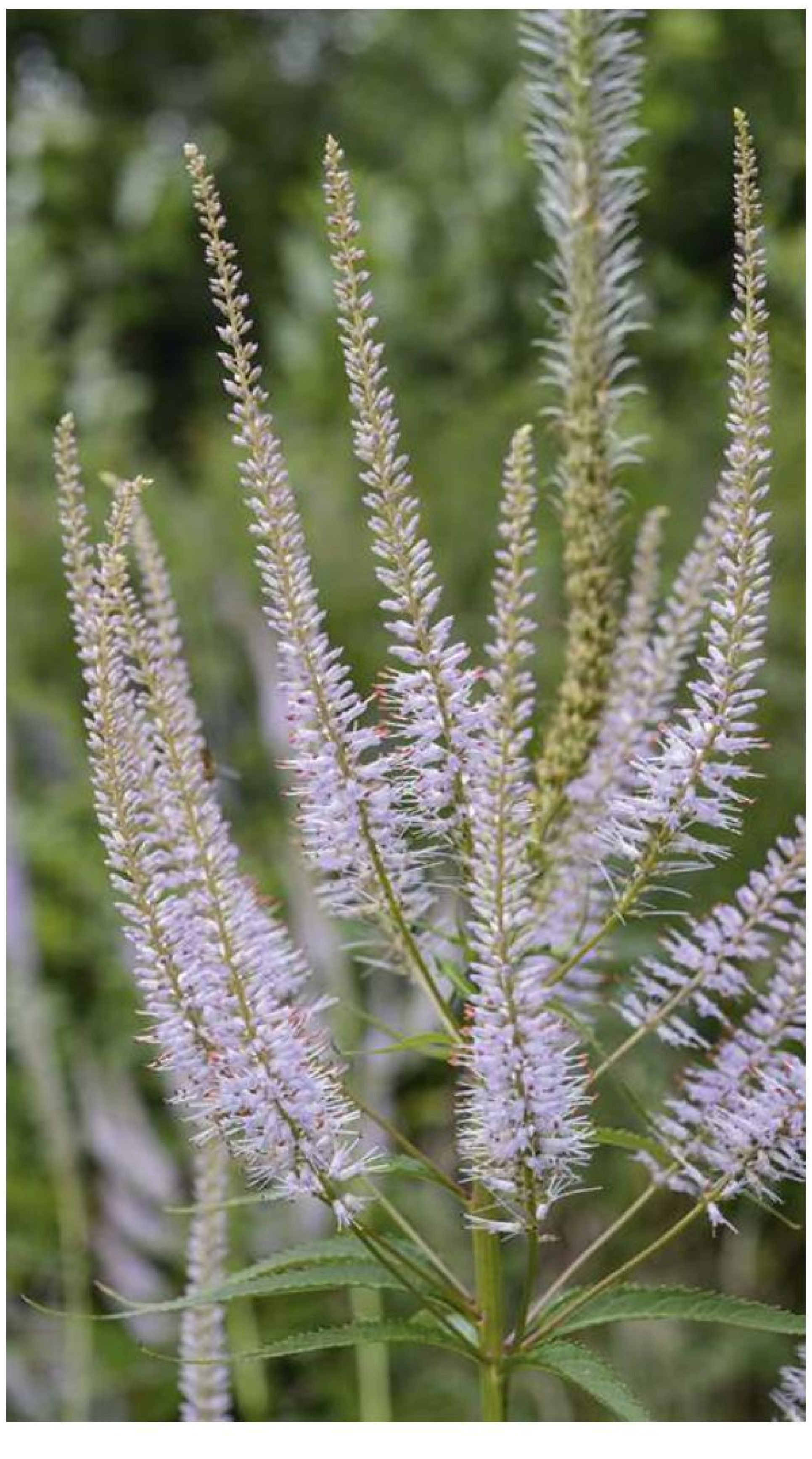
The flowers of *Delphinium elatum* are small and very widely spaced, not what we expect of a good delphinium. But, after planting it along a well-used path at the nursery, everybody wanted it as soon as the first flowers appeared. Healthy, deeply fingered leaves follow very tall stems that don't need staking. These carry very long spikes of sky-blue flowers and, although they are small, the whole makes for an impressive show. We have grown this plant for more than ten years in the same place; it has lived longer than any other delphinium hybrid on our sandy soil.

Height 2m.
Origin Europe, Asia.
Conditions Full sun in fertile soil.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.
Season June. **HK**

VERONICASTRUM VIRGINICUM 'LAVENDELTURM'

Veronicastrums have erect stems with leaves in whorls along their length. They provide a strong, perpendicular accent that lasts well into the autumn, long after the flowers have gone. *V. virginicum* 'Lavendelturm' has branched spikelets of lavender flowers and is adored by bees and butterflies alike. It flowers in midsummer and is a great vertical element in naturalistic planting schemes, mixing particularly well with grasses. They do not suffer from powdery mildew and seldom need staking.

Height 1.5-1.8m.
Origin Eastern USA and southern Canada.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil in sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.
Season July to August. **MC**



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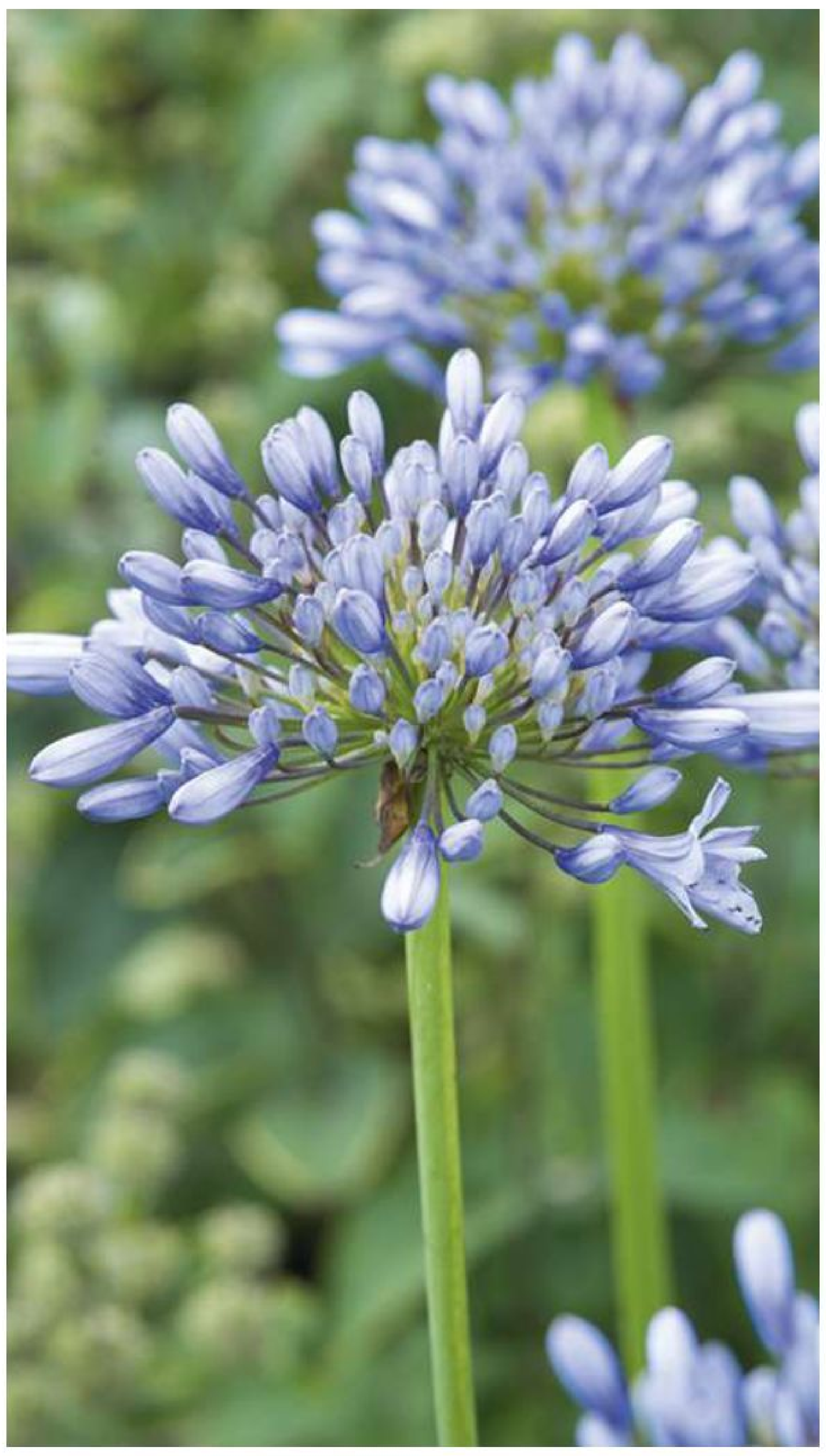


MAAYKE DE RIDDER

AGAPANTHUS 'ROTTERDAM'

There is a whole range of agapanthus cultivars with city names, all grown by amateur breeder Kees van Duivenvoorde. It is really difficult to choose between them, because they are all good. It seems that most customers prefer the really dark colours, but I like 'Rotterdam'. This cultivar has almost luminous light-blue flowers with a darker midvein, arranged in large, spherical heads. These work really well in the garden because you can see them from a great distance. Whether you plant them in a pot or grow them in the open ground, this is a totally reliable flowering agapanthus.

Height 80cm.
Origin South Africa.
Conditions Fertile soil in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Season July to August. **HK**

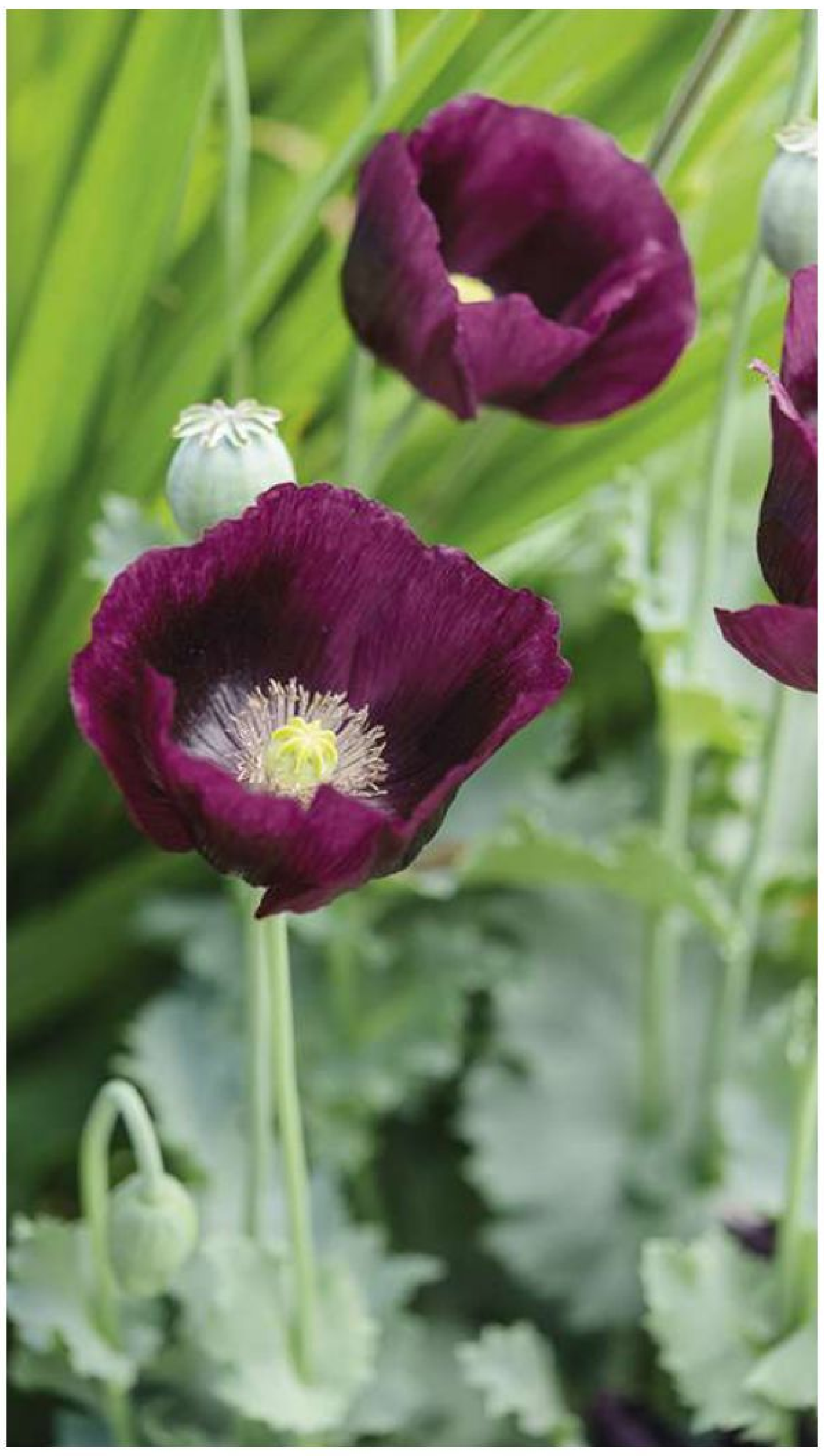
THESE SUMPTUOUS, SILKY BOWLS OF PURPLE ARE MY FAVOURITE OPIUM POPPIES

PAPAVER SOMNIFERUM 'LAUREN'S GRAPE'

PAPAVER SOMNIFERUM 'LAUREN'S GRAPE'

These big, sumptuous, silky bowls of deep purple are probably my favourite opium poppies. Designer Lauren Springer spent years removing all the opium poppies that weren't deep purple from her garden. When they have only themselves to cross with they come almost entirely true. Best sown in pots or in situ to avoid disturbing the root. If you want to grow more than one colour, you'll either have to remove all seedheads and sow fresh every year or resign yourself to the colours mixing and muddying back towards the wild, lavender opium poppy.

Height 90cm-1.2m.
Origin Species from Asia, bred in USA.
Conditions Sun; good drainage.
Hardiness USDA 7a-10b.
Season June to July. **DW**



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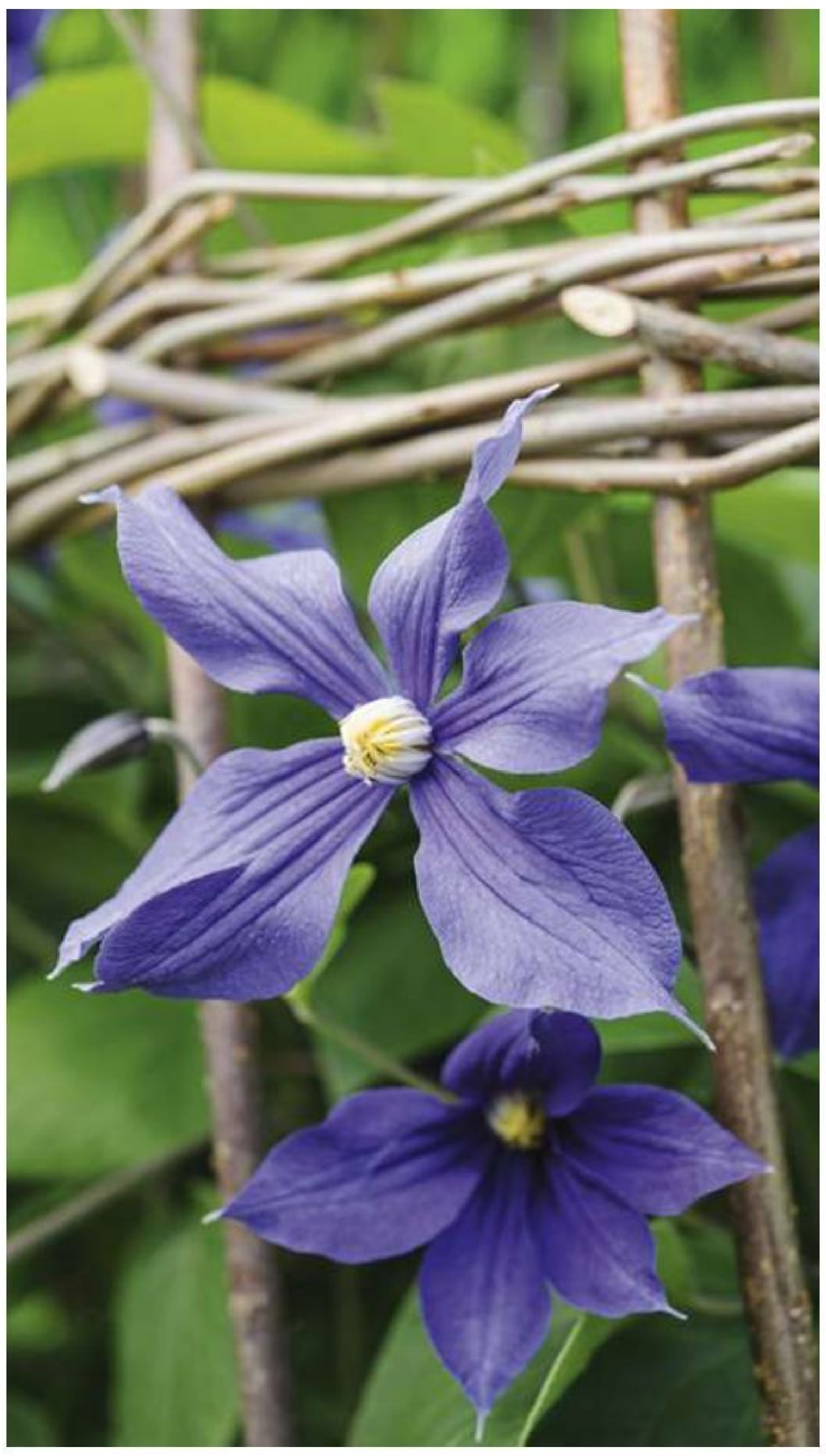


JASON INGRAM

CLEMATIS X DURANDII

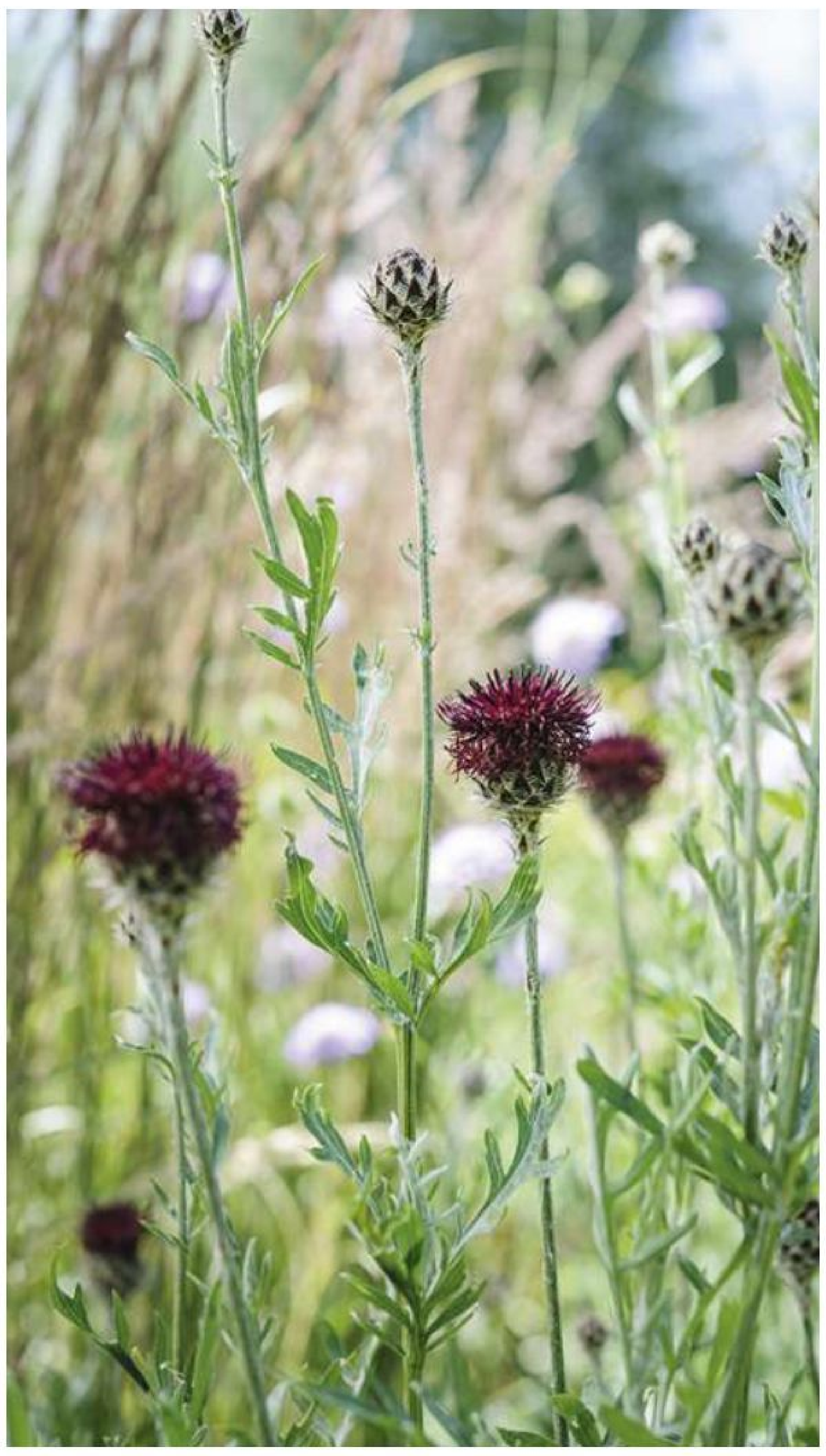
This herbaceous clematis does not climb, but if supported well will clamber. It is a bit of a handful – happy to straggle two metres in any direction – but infinitely rewarding, producing showers of big, deep-blue-purple flowers month after month. Books will tell you to grow it through a shrub but you will never see the flowers that way. It is happiest with plenty of sun and a support of its own that you can keep tying it back into. It will grow up to two metres and then cascade back down, covered in flowers. AGM.

Height 2m.
Origin A 19th-century hybrid of *C. integrifolia* and *C. lanuginosa*.
Conditions Good soil in sun or light shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season June to September. **DW**

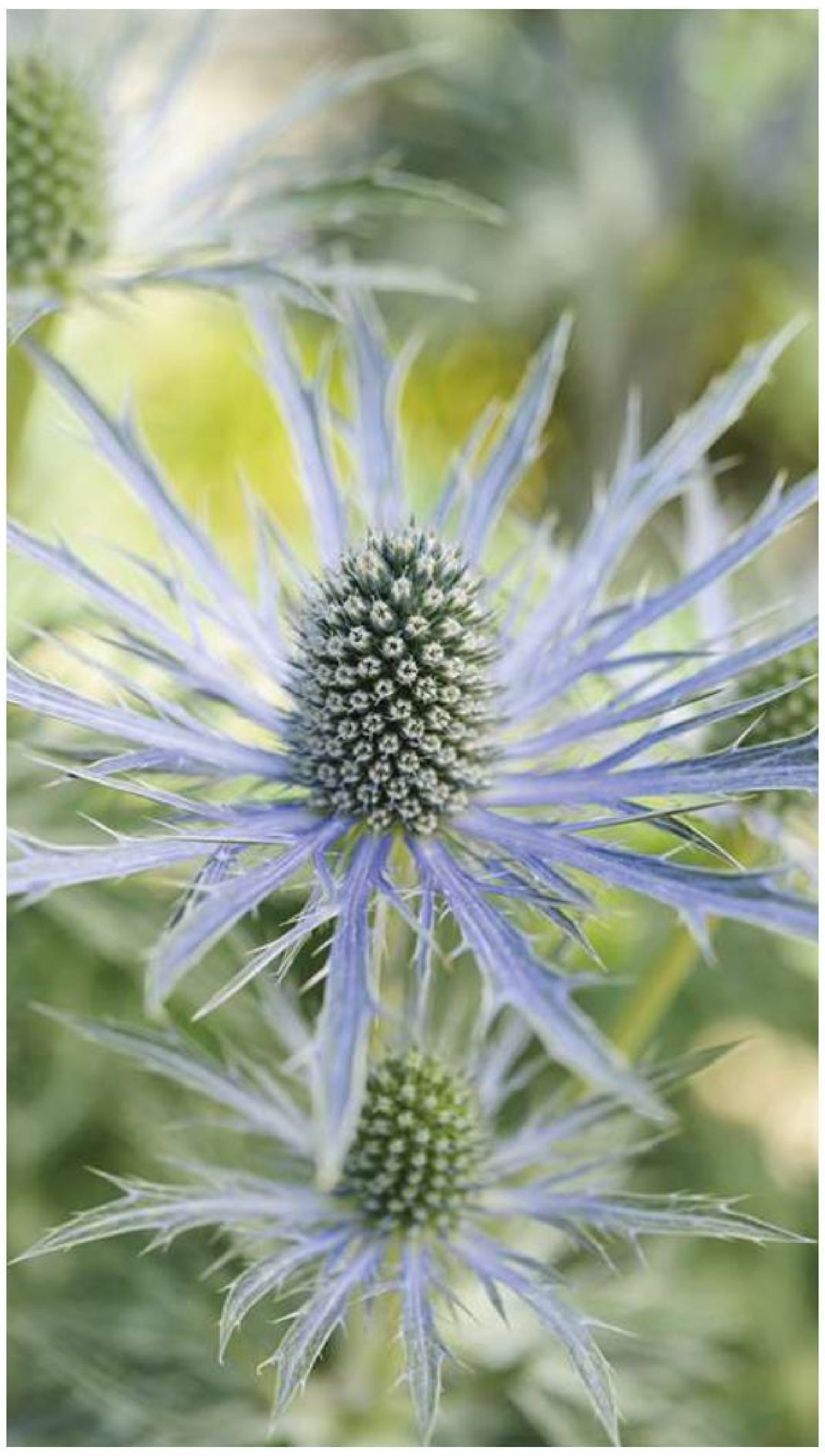
CENTAUREA ATROPURPUREA

The fat buds of *Centaurea atropurpurea* emerge above intricately cut, grey leaves and are so beautifully patterned with shiny, dark-edged, overlapping scales that there seems almost no need for any flowers. But soon the top of the bud will be forced open by the dark, wine-red thistle flowers spreading outwards like a stain of blood. Flowering all through July and August, they add a touch of drama to the garden. The flowers are attractive to bees and other pollinators, and are good for cutting.

Height 1m.
Origin The Balkans.
Conditions Sunny spot with good drainage.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.
Season July to August. **DW**



JASON INGRAM



JASON INGRAM

ERYNGIUM X *OLIVERIANUM*

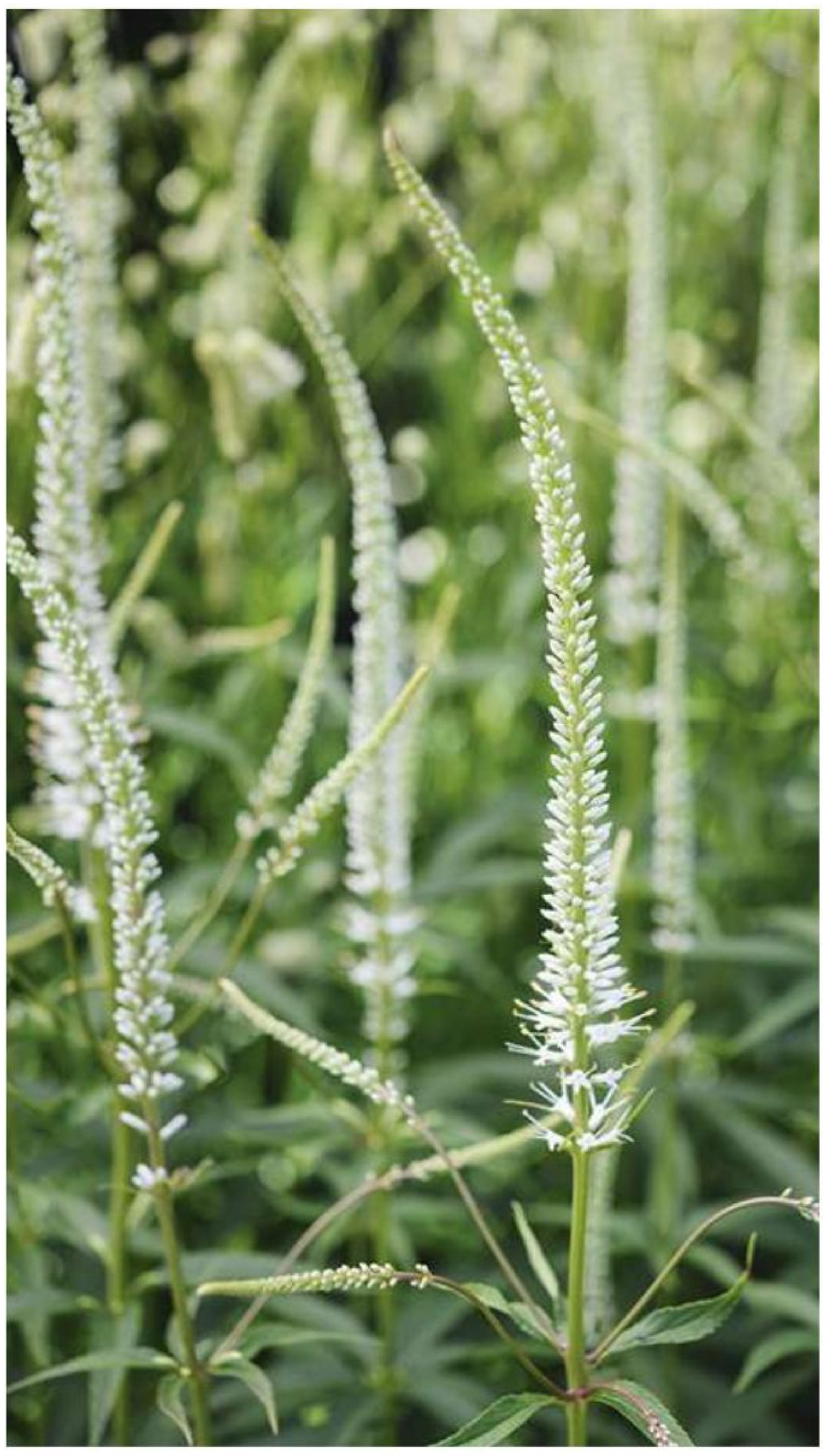
Everyone wants to grow *Eryngium alpinum* with its dramatic, big, soft blue ruff of lacy bracts. But *Eryngium alpinum* fades away, dwindling in all but the most perfect conditions, while *Eryngium* x *oliverianum* bulks up well and just gets better year on year. It has almost the same big, blue, lacy flowerheads, plus it has handsome jagged leaves on stout, purple stems. I grow both in my gravel garden, but I have to replant *E. alpinum* every couple of years in order to keep it going. Both of them have handsome seedheads that stand well into winter. AGM.

Height 90cm.
Origin 19th-century hybrid.
Conditions Full sun, good drainage.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.
Season July to August. **DW**

VERONICASTRUM VIRGINICUM ‘ALBUM’

The height of restrained elegance, veronicastrums hold their dark-green leaves in layered whorls, giving a distinctive texture to the garden before the flowers appear. The white flower spikes surge upwards out of the foliage, each one densely clothed with tiny, white flowers. The myriad vertical spires look like a cluster of tall spears. It is the perfect crisp white accent to the billowing excesses of the late summer garden. Dark-brown seedheads follow, extending interest to January, and contrasting with the horizontal whorls of leaves below. AGM.

Height 1.2-1.5m.
Origin USA.
Conditions Sun or light shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.
Season July to August. **DW**



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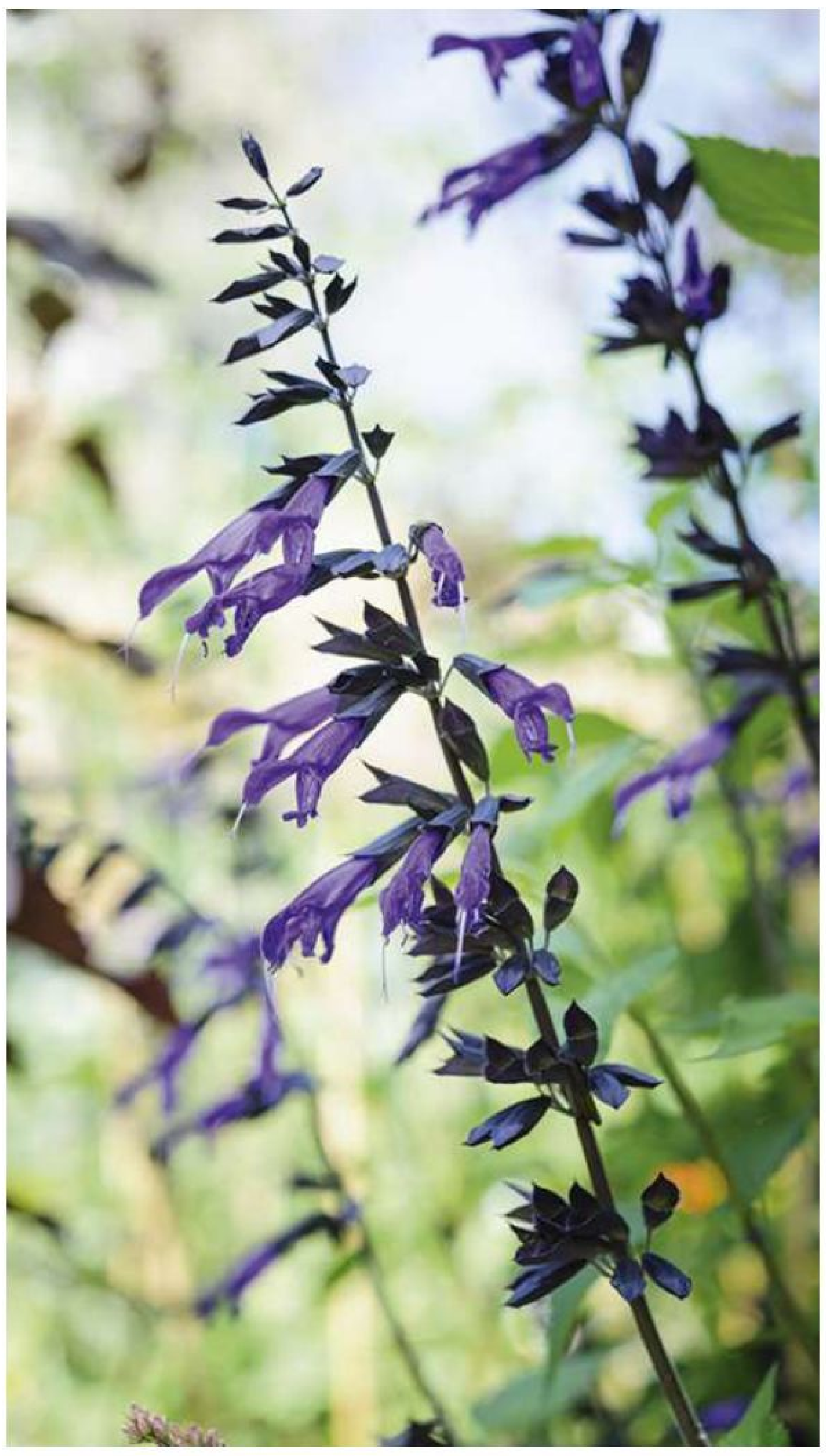


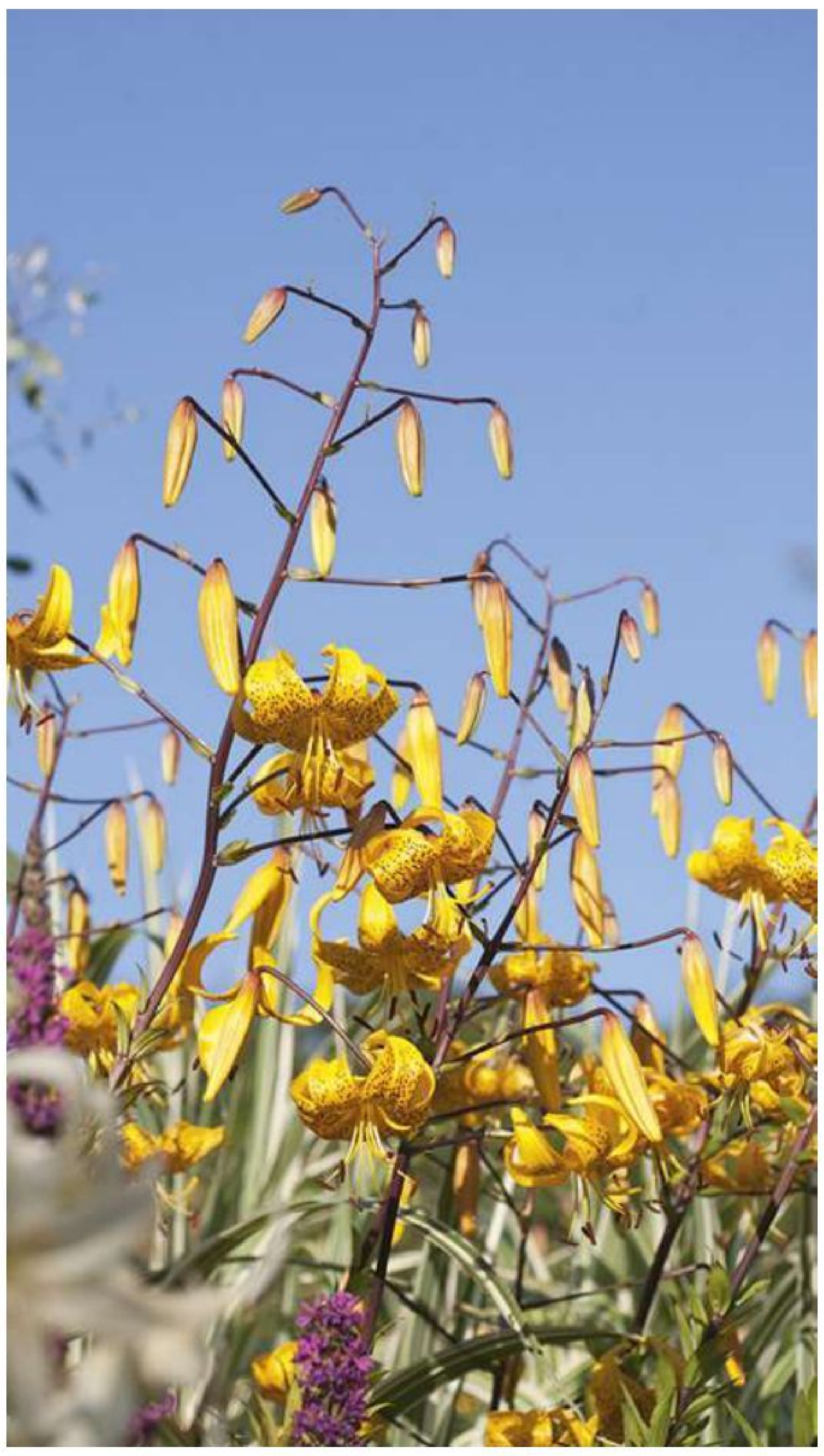
JASON INGRAM

SALVIA ‘AMISTAD’

This cultivar, which was found by plant expert Rolando Uria in an Argentinian garden – *amistad* means friendship in Spanish – became the best salvia in my salvia-ridden garden last summer. Deep, purple-blue flowers sprout from almost-black calyxes on long, dark stems. Both the young plants, which grew to a metre tall, and the older ones, which grew up to 1.5m tall, all flowered profusely from July right through to October. The vigorous bushy plants are self-supporting with glossy-green leaves. So far it has been hardy for me, but we have not yet had a hard winter to test it. AGM.

Height 1.5m.
Origin Cultivar found in Argentina.
Conditions Full sun, good drainage.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 8a-11.
Season July to October. **DW**

> FLOWER SPIKES ARE A BRILLIANT GRADUATION OF PALE ORANGE TO GOLD
>
> *KNIPHOFIA* 'TAWNY KING'



SHARON PEARSON

LILIUM LEICHTLINII

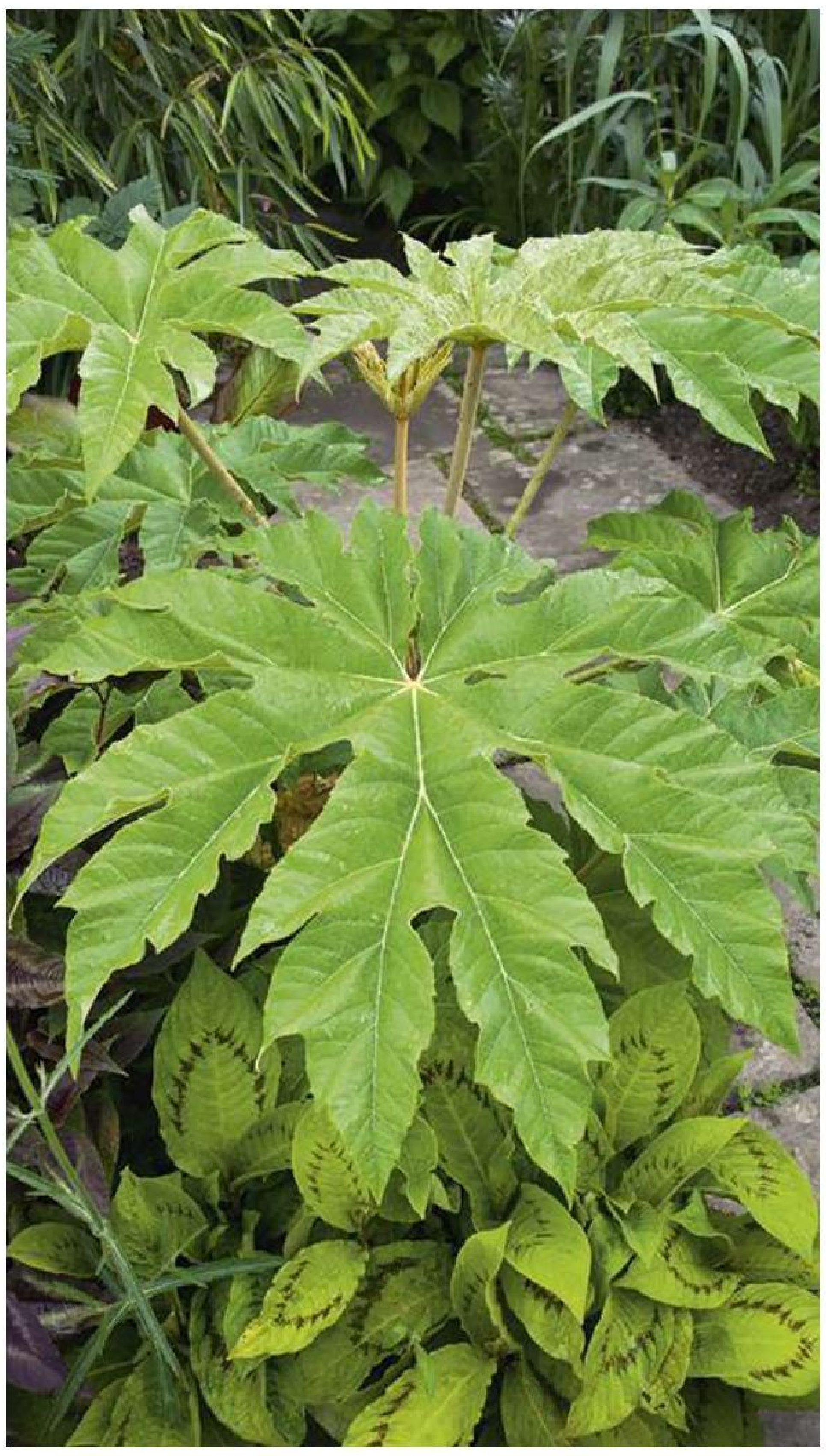
A chic Asiatic lily with charcoal brown shoots that emerge from the ground like prehistoric vegetation, before elongating into long, stiff and robust, shiny black stems that are clothed in dense whorls of thin, glossy, green leaves. Well spaced and uprightly angular, dark-coloured side branches hold oval buds, which are chocolate-purple flushed green in colour. These open into large, yellow dangling flowers. From the centre of each flower protrude elongated and elegantly reflexed filaments carrying prominent cinnamon anthers floating around a central carpel.

Height 1.5m.
Origin South Korea and Japan.
Conditions Moist but free-draining, acid soil in sun or partial shade.
Hardiness USDA 5b-11.
Season July to August. **FG**

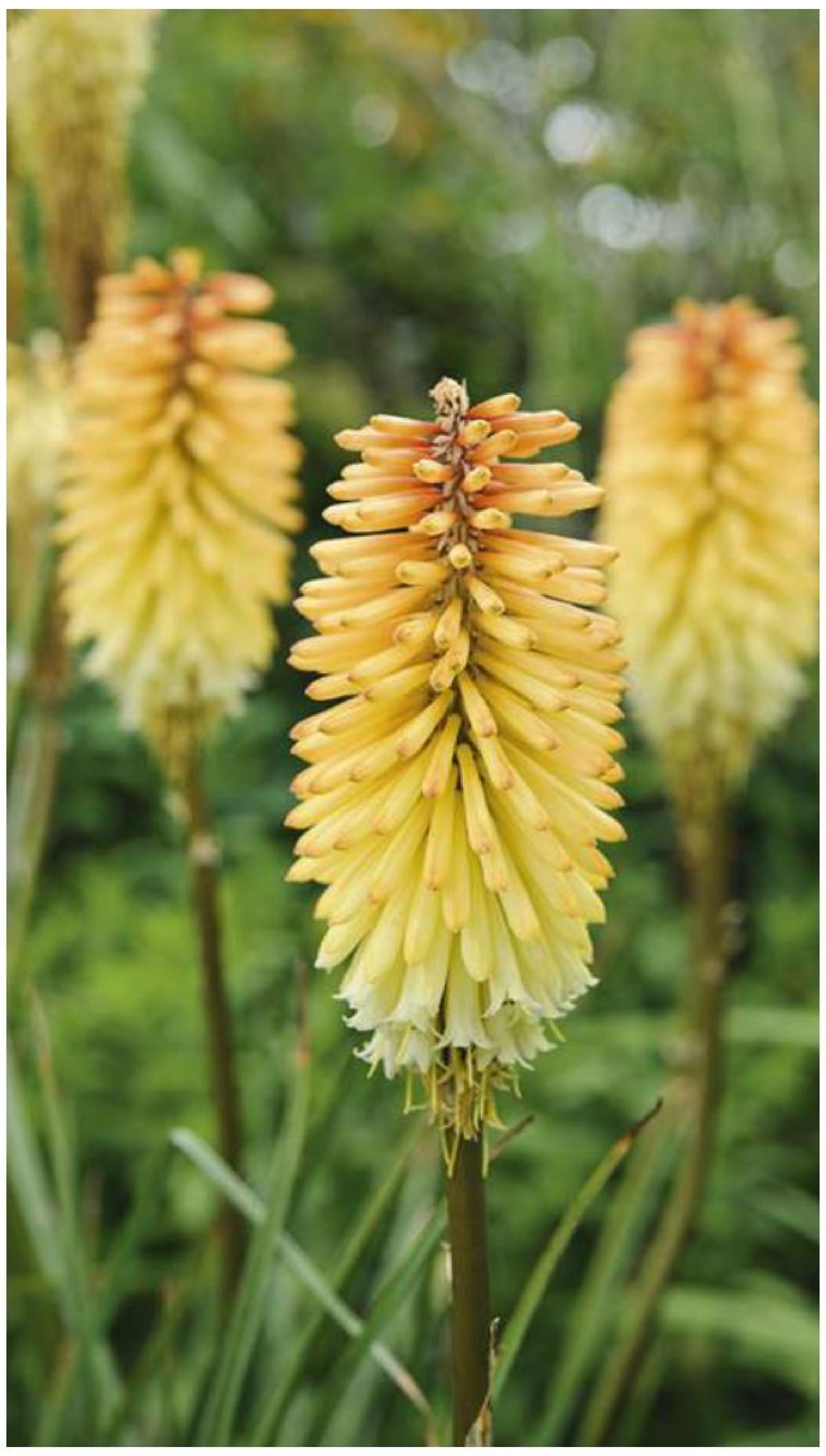
TETRAPANAX PAPYRIFER

This is one of the most dramatic foliage plants. Huge, deeply lobed, green, palmate leaves up to two metres across, neatly dissected with cream veins, are held on arching stem, like vast fans. The undersides of each leaf, the leaf stalks, and all the active growing shoots are covered in a woolly indumentum. Established plants flower in late summer with ivy-like clusters of creamy flowers emerging from down-covered buds. Small, black berries containing seeds follow. Spreads extensively from underground roots and different clones exist, varying in leaf size and shape, colour, habit and hardiness. AGM.

Height 3m.
Origin Endemic to Taiwan.
Conditions Sun or partial shade; good soil.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 6a-10b.
Season June to November. **FG**



SHARON PEARSON



JASON INGRAM

KNIPHOFIA 'TAWNY KING'

The drama of kniphofia flowers is fleeting, so choose one with an impressive display. Flower spikes of 'Tawny King' are a brilliant graduation of pale orange to gold, fading slowly to creamy buff. Flowers are plentiful, provided the crowns are not overshadowed by neighbouring plants. Teamed with the deep-blue spikes of *Nepeta grandiflora* they speak of sunny days and scorching temperatures – even if the British summer is sometimes rather slow to oblige. AGM.

Height 90cm.
Origin Species originate mainly in the mountains and upland grasslands of South Africa, some in central Africa.
Conditions Deep, fertile soil in full sun, benefiting from spring and autumn mulch.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.
Season June to July. **CM**

SHARON PEARSON

TAGETES PATULA DIXTER STRAIN

Christopher Lloyd 'worked up' this French marigold at Great Dixter by selecting seeds from the tallest plants, resulting in a most elegant marigold. Gently fluted, branching stems carry dozens of single flowers with dark-green, finely cut pinnate leaves providing the backdrop. The flowers are 3.5cm wide and glow in rich terracotta red with each petal edged with a thin mustard-yellow line. A small yet prominent yellow boss decorates the centre. Flowering is long and plants warrant support from a cane. Save your own seed but keep mother plants away from other marigolds.

Height 1.2m.
Origin Species originally from Mexico, selected from *T*. 'Cinnabar'.
Conditions Full sun in most soils.
Hardiness USDA 2a-11.
Season June to November. **FG**

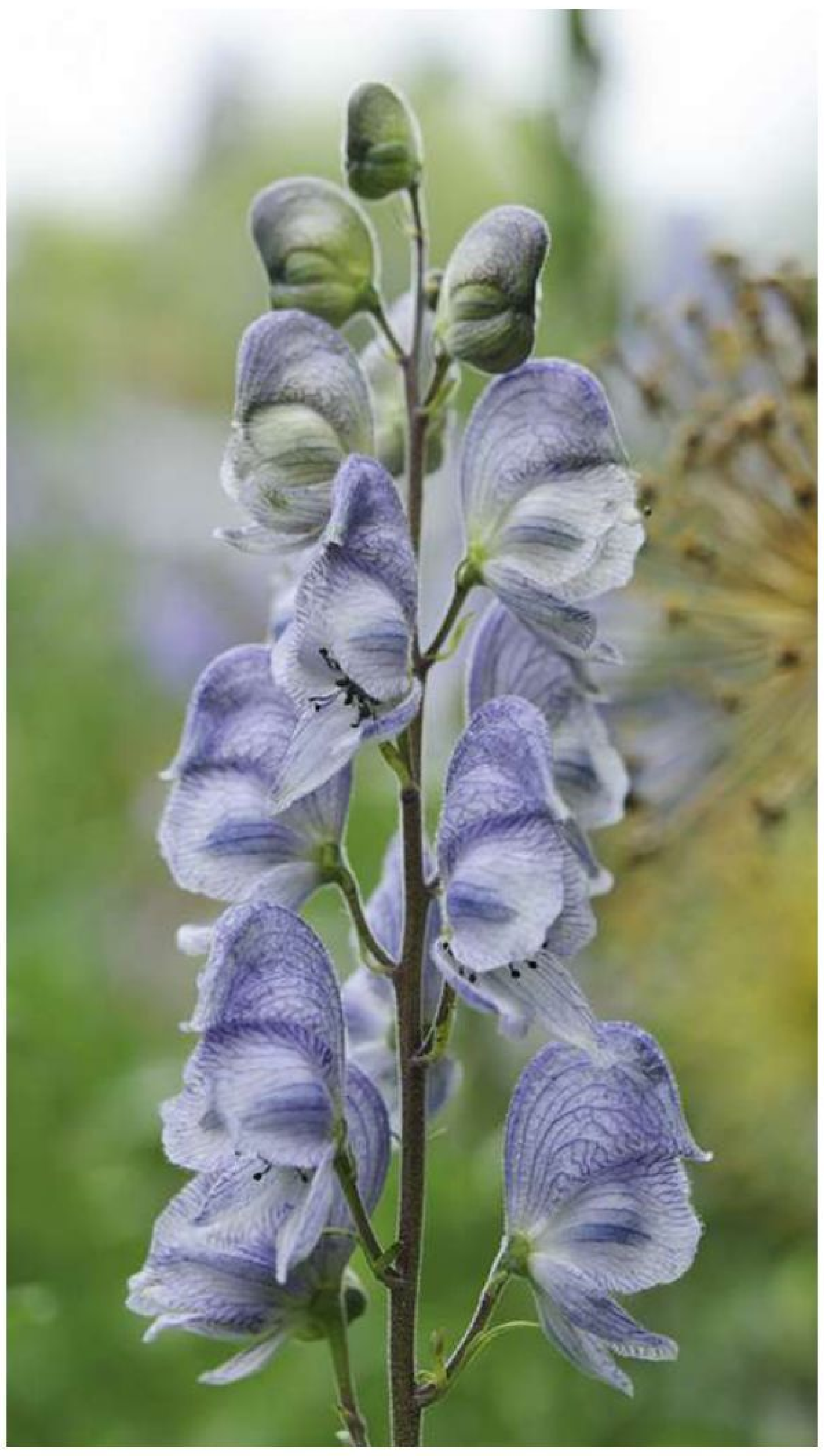
EACH FLOWER RESEMBLES AN ELIZABETHAN RUFF, AND IS A POLLEN MAGNET FOR BEES

ERYNGIUM AMETHYSTINUM

ACONITUM 'STAINLESS STEEL'

The steely grey-blue flowers of this plant have a ghostly quality in the low light of early evening. The beautiful dense spikes also make a fine cut flower. In borders at home, we plant them between clumps of *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light' where the silver variegated grass hides their untidy lower foliage – a common trait of aconitums. Aconitum contains toxins which can be absorbed through skin so prolonged exposure could be harmful. Wear gardening gloves to handle plants and flowers. AGM.

Height 1m.
Origin From a Dutch introduction of hybrid origin.
Conditions Fertile, moisture-retentive soil in sun or light shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.
Season June to July. **CM**



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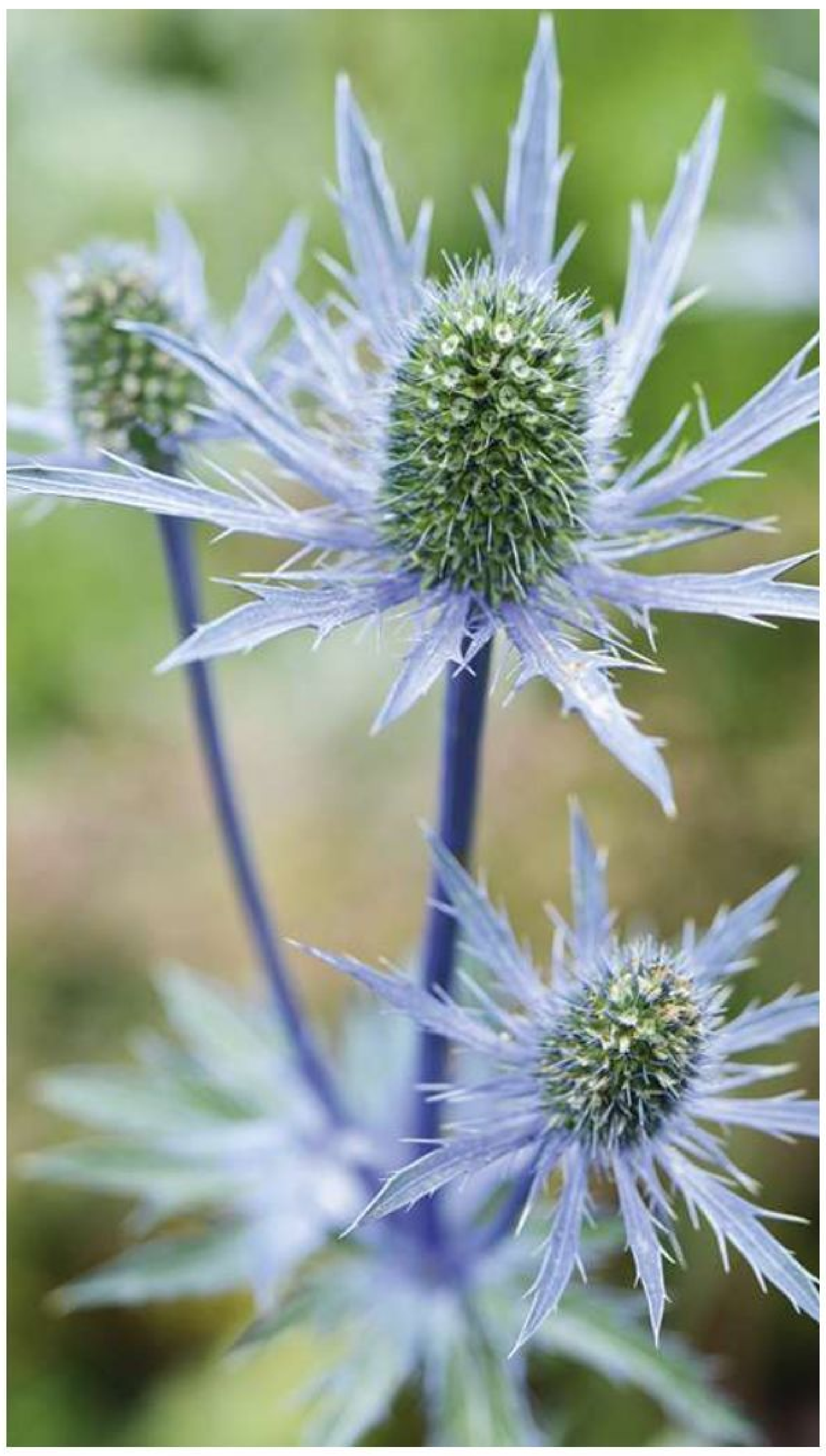


JASON INGRAM

ERYNGIUM AMETHYSTINUM

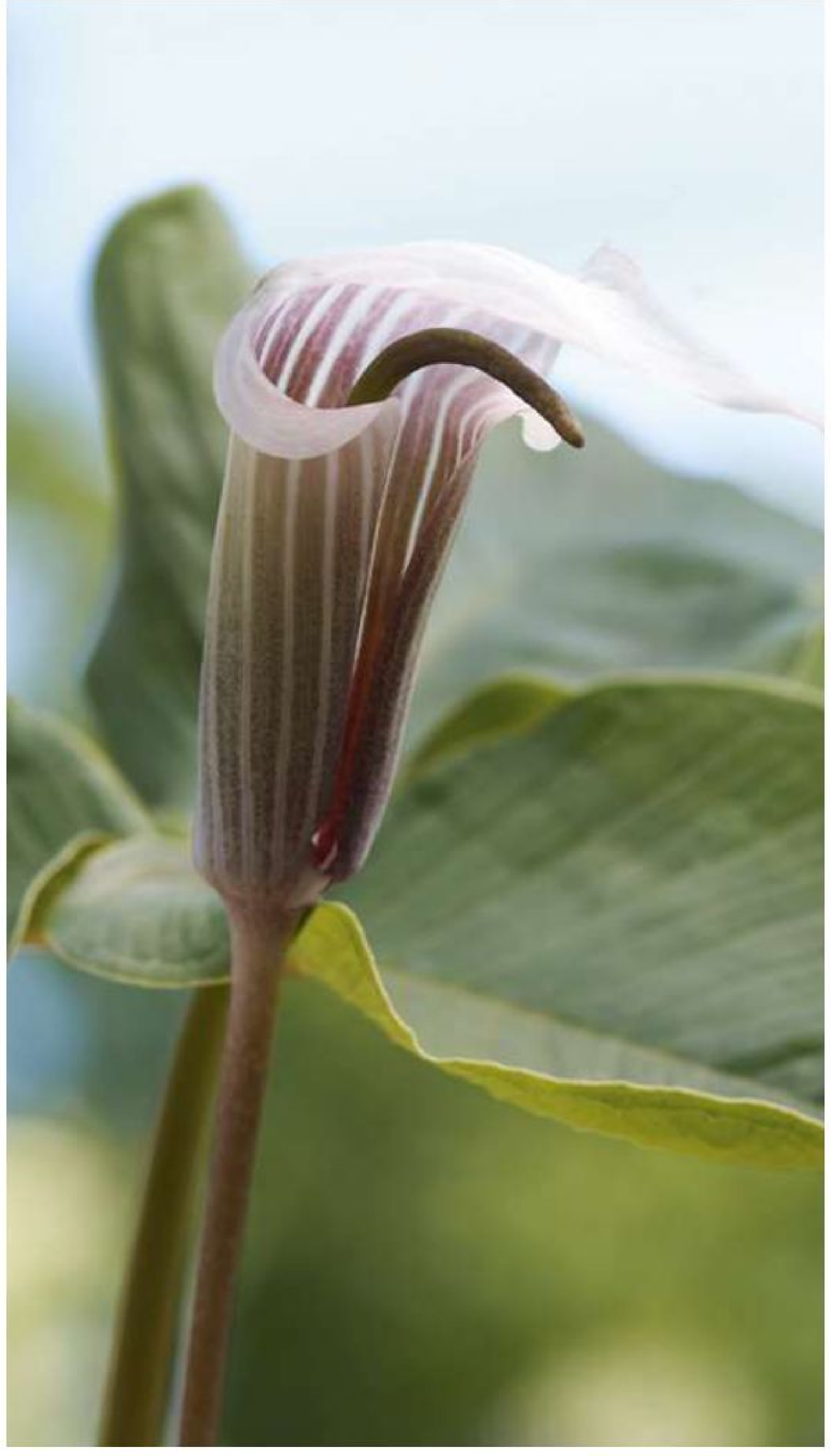
This plant steals in on the scene in early summer. Having quietly grown up through adjacent foliage almost unnoticed, it ripens in the sunlight to a magnificent blue and demands attention. Each flower resembles an intricate Elizabethan ruff, and is a veritable pollen magnet for bees and butterflies. The stiff and spiny structure is defensive, while ensuring the plant needs no artificial corsetry to stand. Best kept in lean soils to curb ultimate height and to aid their vertical stability.

Height 60cm.
Origin Italy, Sicily and the Balkans.
Conditions Well-drained loam from mildly alkaline to acidic.
Hardiness USDA 6a-10b.
Season Best colour from June to August, though the structure endures longer. **CM**

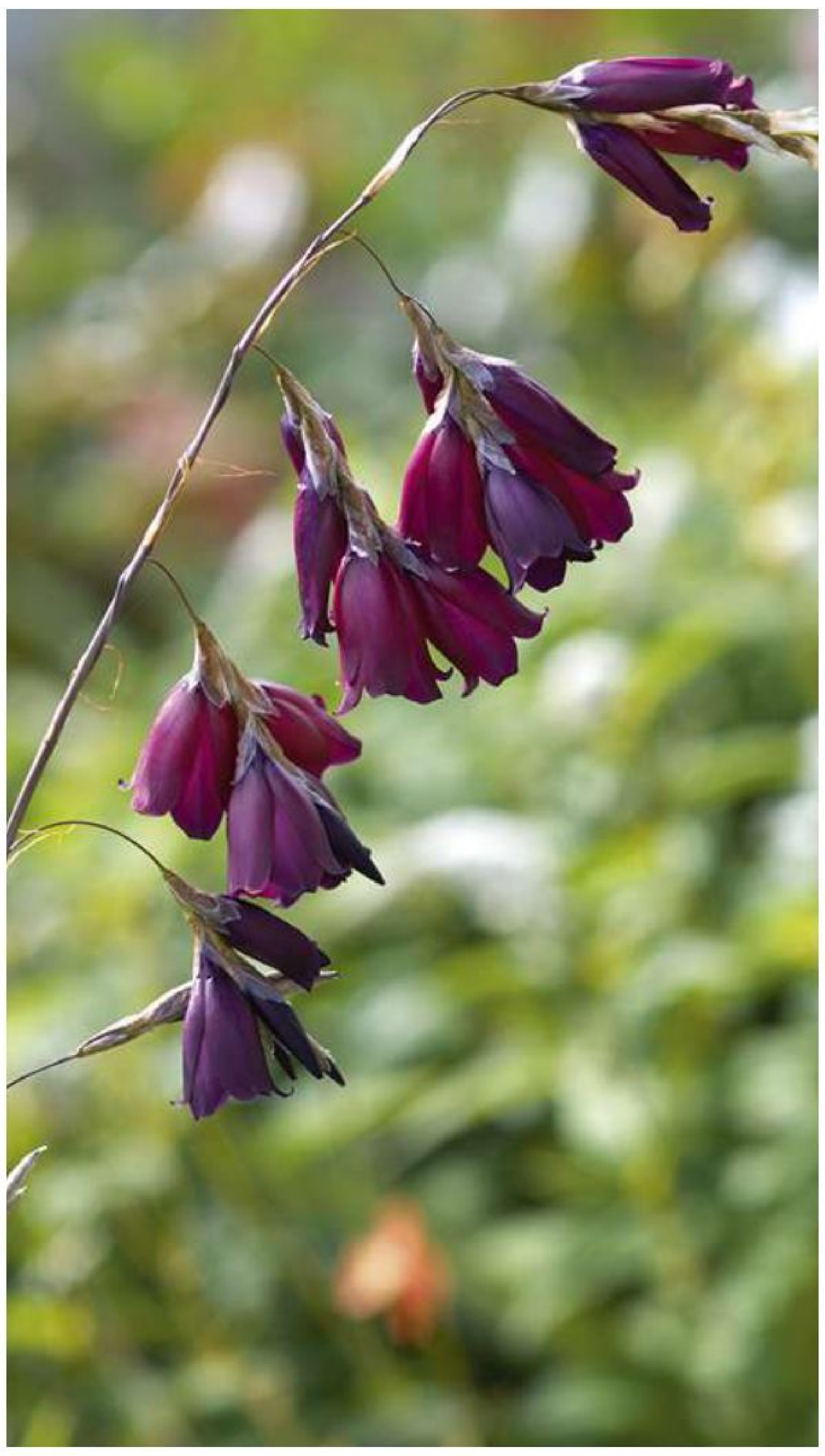
ARISAEMA CANDIDISSIMUM

This has good, short foliage and beautifully scented flowers. They last longer because they don't get pollinated. I never get fertile seed, which would be useful for a nurseryman. I decided this might be because my plants are one clone that is not self-fertile. Eventually I managed to track down a tuber grown from seed in New York State – which had to be a different clone. I planted it hoping it would cross-fertilise with my existing clump, giving me viable seed. I shouldn't have bothered: the new plant finished flowering two weeks before the first of my flowers opened. AGM.

Height 30cm.
Origin China.
Conditions Moist-ish shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 6a-9b
Season July and August. **BB**



TORIE CHUGG



TORIE CHUGG

DIERAMA PULCHERRIMUM 'MERLIN'

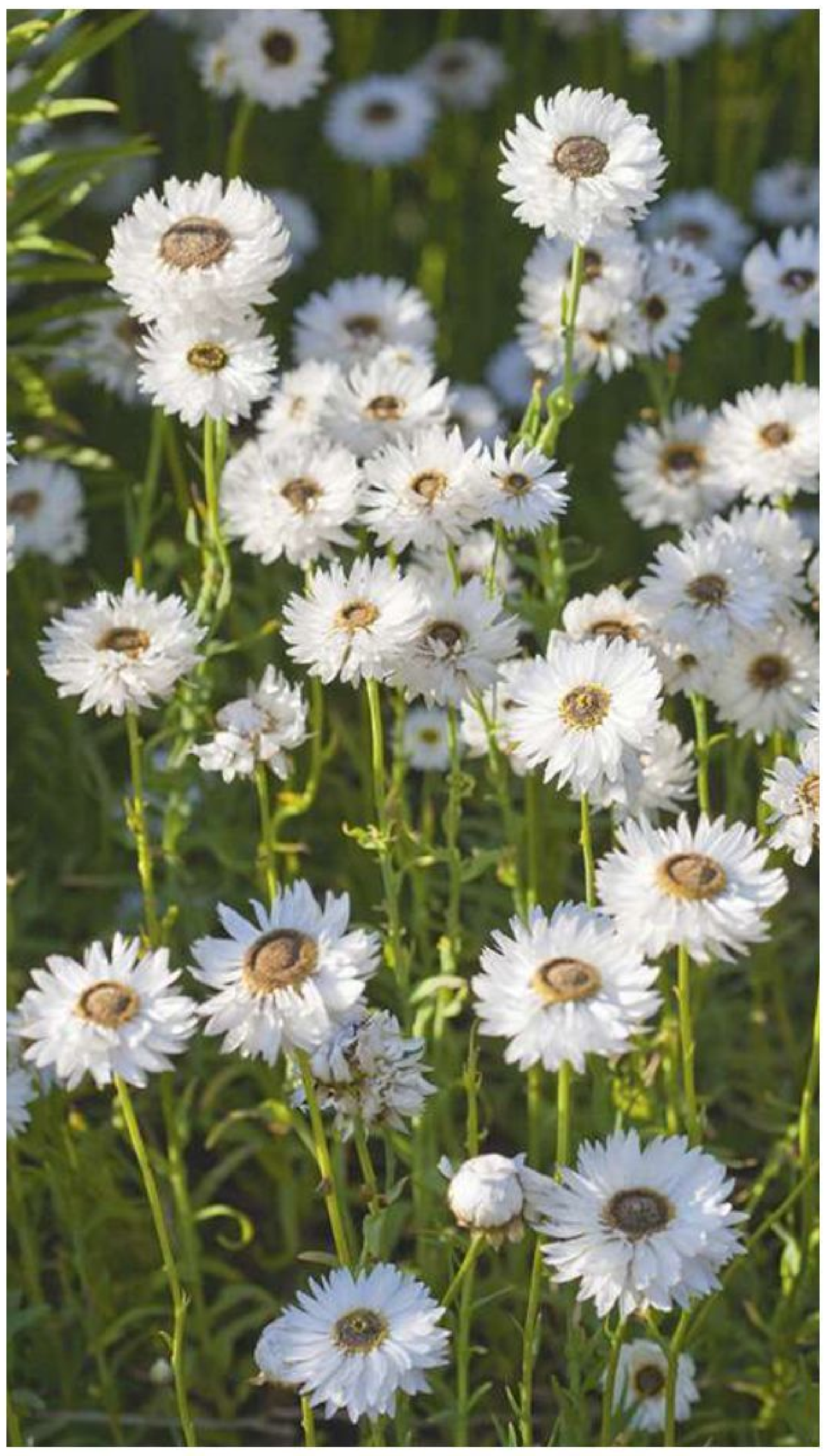
Until it became possible to reproduce tissue culture in a laboratory, it was almost impossible to find dieramas in the exact colour you wanted. Propagation by seed from richly coloured plants usually produced more washed-out colours, and reproduction by division caused plants to sulk. The colour everyone wanted was blackberry, in the cultivar 'Blackbird'. Now anyone can have the deep black-red of 'Merlin'. Horticulture's Exclusive Brethren don't like this: 'It's awfully egalitarian.' Good thing too. The flowers drip from slender stems that constantly move in the breeze.

Height 1m.
Origin South Africa.
Conditions Well-drained soil that's not dry.
Hardiness USDA 8a-10b.
Season Flowers midsummer. **BB**

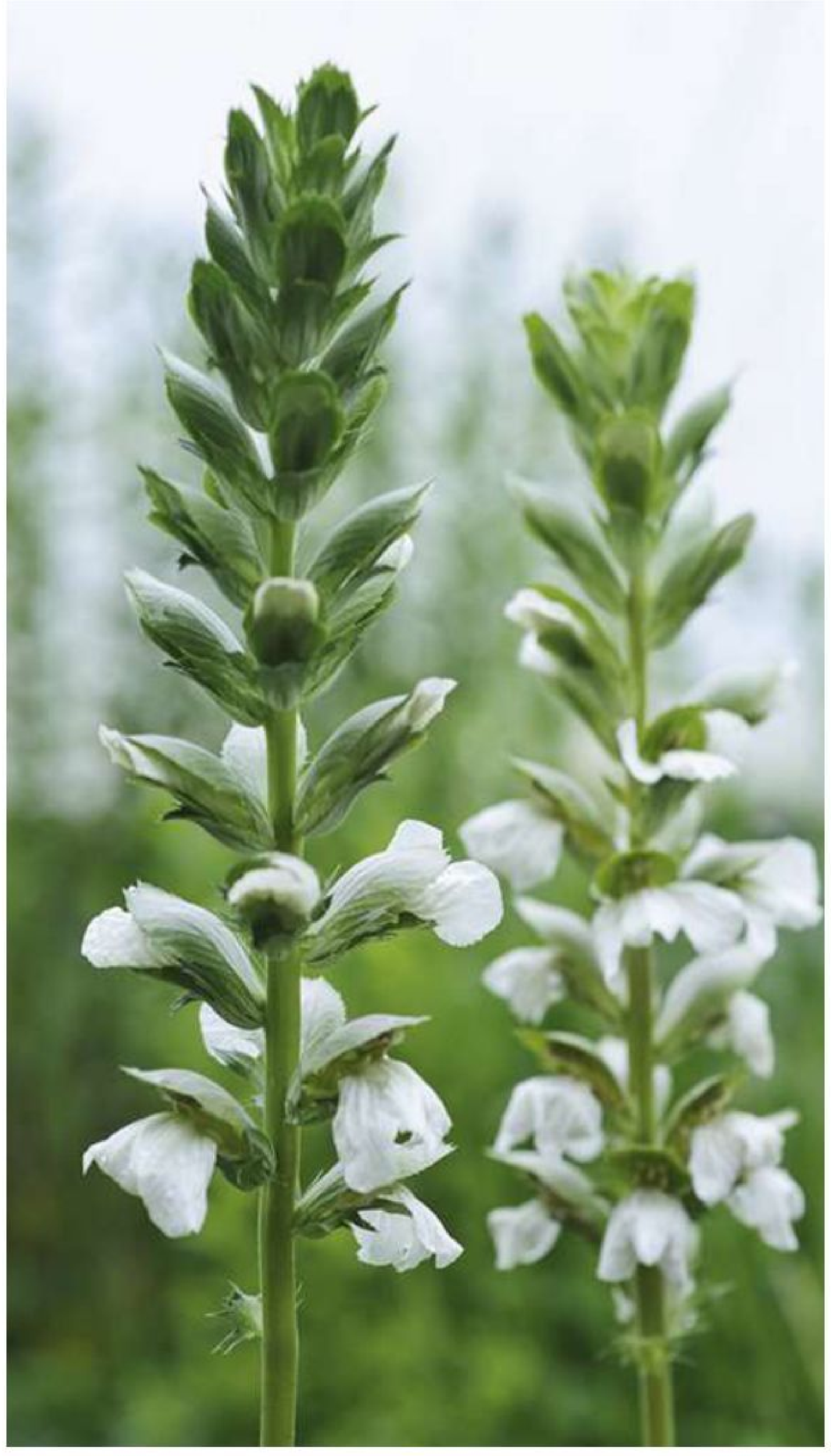
RHODANTHE CHLOROCEPHALA SUBSP. *ROSEA* 'PIERROT'

A delicate everlasting daisy, ideal for cutting and drying but also worthwhile in the garden, either in pots or borders. The flowers have translucent, white, crisp, papery petals in multiple rows forming ragged discs 2cm across, each offset by a charming, yellow-rimmed black eye. These are held on long, stiff, upright stems dressed in short, linear, grey leaves. Cheerful during the day, the flowers shut into neat globes by night before opening again the next morning. Sown outside in hot climates, but in the UK they're best if sown under glass in March, pricked out into trays and planted out in May.

Height 40cm.
Origin A native of Australia.
Conditions Full sun in well-drained soil.
Season June to August. **FG**



SHARON PEARSON



JASON INGRAM

ACANTHUS MOLLIS 'RUE LEDAN'

There is a classic elegance to this plant, its scrolling foliage a design feature on early Corinthian columns. This form has vigour and rigidity, sporting fine, turgid flower spikes of ghostly white. Stems stand for weeks without staking, and often endure late into autumn to provide winter structure and valuable bird food. A reliable mainstay in a prominent north-facing border. AGM.

Height 1m.
Origin Species native to Europe. This form originated in a garden in northern France.
Conditions Most well-drained garden loam, will benefit from an early spring mulch of leaf mould.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.
Season July to October. **CM**

LATE SUMMER

Midway through the year, the garden is in full swing. These plants celebrate the long, hot days and balmy nights with scent and a tapestry of colour.

SHARON PEARSON

ANEMONE TOMENTOSA

This isn't the most refined or richly coloured but it's certainly the most vigorous of the Chinese anemones, making it very useful as a host. Its strength means you can successfully under- and interplant it with early companions, such as *Galanthus nivalis*, *Allium* 'Purple Sensation' and *Gladiolus communis* subsp. *byzantinus*. It also allows occasional self-sowers, such as honesty, Welsh poppies and *Smyrnium perfoliatum* to interlope within it, before the anemone smothers the space with handsome leaves, flowering from July to September. True to its name the flowers are covered throughout in tiny hairs and a pretty, pale pink from a yellow centre.

Height 1.5m.
Origin China.
Conditions Rich soil in full sun or part shade.
Hardiness USDA 3a-8b.
Season July to September. **FG**

CROCOSMIA X CROCOSMIIFLORA ‘SOLFATARE’

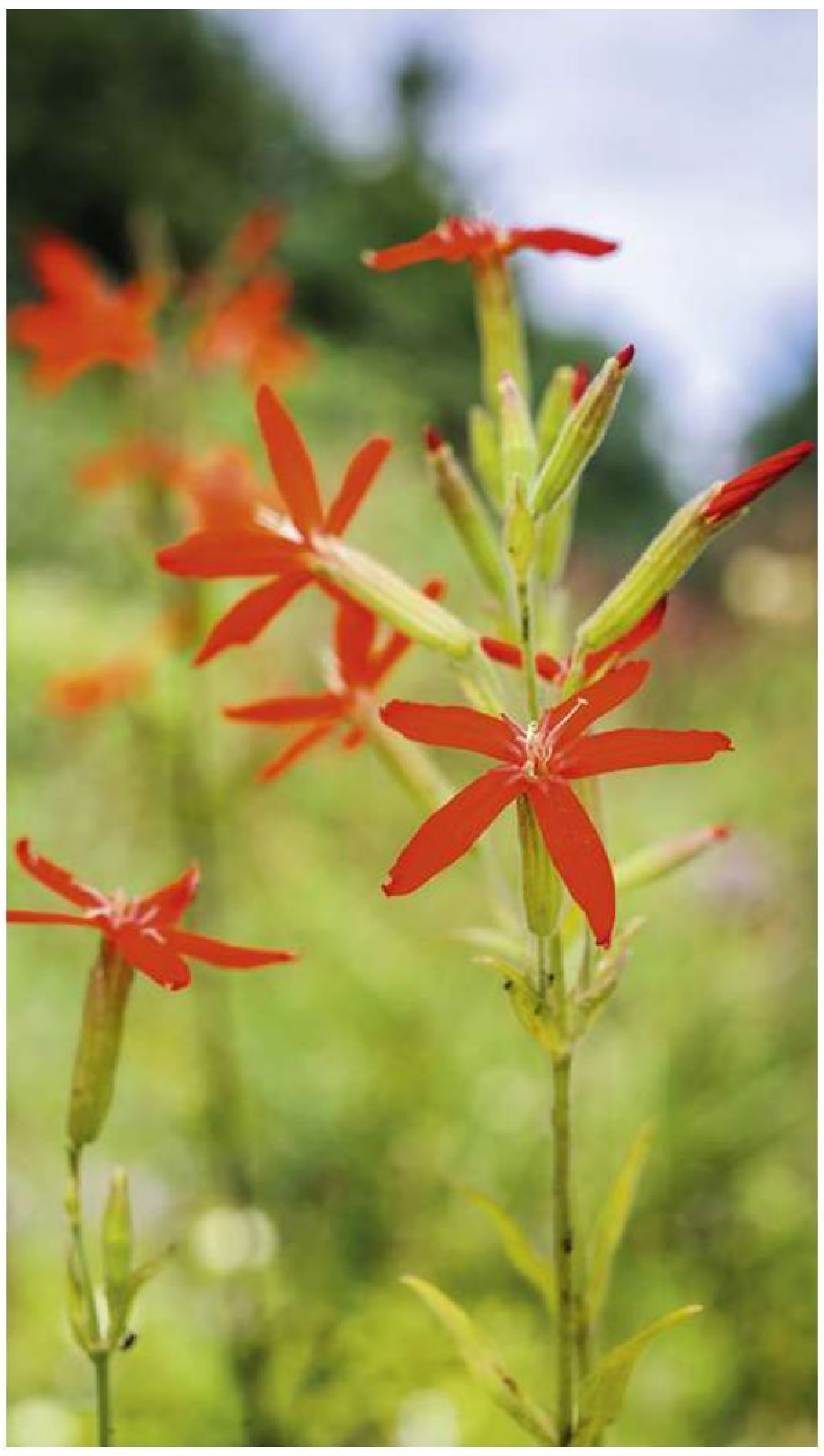
This is a plant that earns its keep in many ways. The foliage is a unique shade of coppery green, which, with the vertical accent of the sword-shaped leaves, will contrast well with many other garden perennials. The flowers are a soft shade of yellow and are held just above the leaves on graceful, arching stems. Plant at the front of the border for best effect in rich, moist soil. This species can suffer in very cold winters and is best suited to warmer areas of the UK. AGM.

Height 50cm.
Origin Garden origin, originally South Africa.
Conditions Any soil that is not saturated in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 6a-9b.
Season July to October. **MR**

JASON INGRAM

WITH SOFT-YELLOW FLOWERS AND COPPERY GREEN FOLIAGE, THIS PLANT EARNS ITS KEEP

CROCOSMIA X *CROCOSMIIFLORA* 'SOLFATARE'



JASON INGRAM

SILENE REGIA

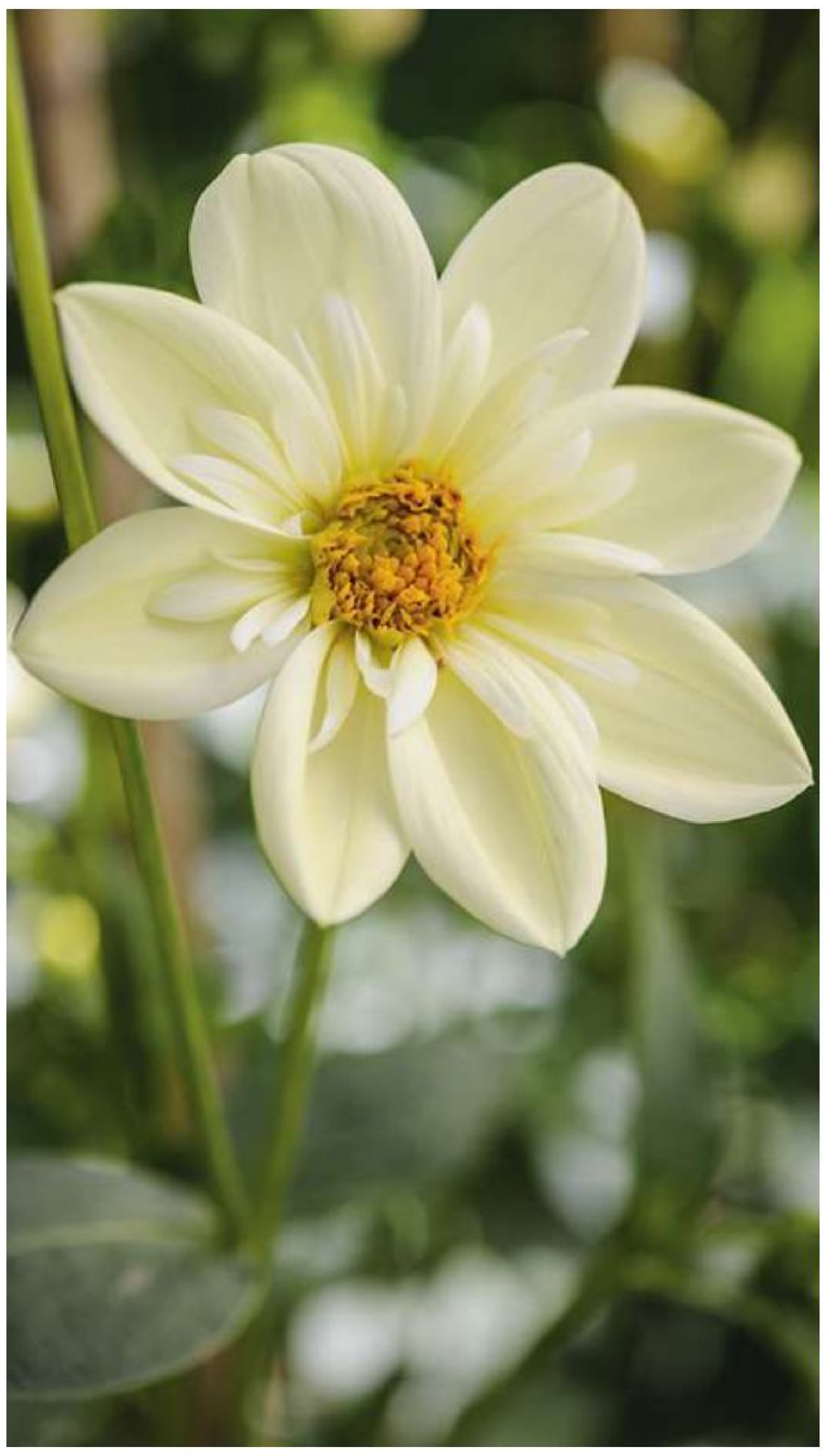
This striking plant hails from the US prairies and dry woodlands. In late summer its red, star-shaped flowers look like a shower of bright fireworks. However, the foliage can be a disappointment, emerging healthy and pale green but often becoming slightly contorted as the flower stems elongate. Growing it surrounded by tall, flowering perennials and grasses alleviates this problem. It is commonly known as catchfly as the stem below the flower is covered with a sticky secretion that captures unwitting insects.

Height 75cm-1.5m.
Origin Central and southern USA.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.
Season July to August. **MC**

DAHLIA 'CLAIR DE LUNE'

For those gardeners who find the blooms of dahlias a little uncomfortable in the flower garden, *Dahlia* 'Clair de Lune' might be worth considering. It has a voice, but does not shout. The soft-yellow flowers are of the collarette type and are presented on strong stems well clear of the lush, green foliage. A tall plant, it does best with a stout cane positioned at the back of the plant with twine encircling the stems. Provide compost when planting, water and deadhead through the season and it will continue to flower into the autumn. AGM.

Height 2m.
Origin Garden origin, originally Mexico.
Conditions Any good garden soil with added compost in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 4a-9b.
Season August to October. **MR**



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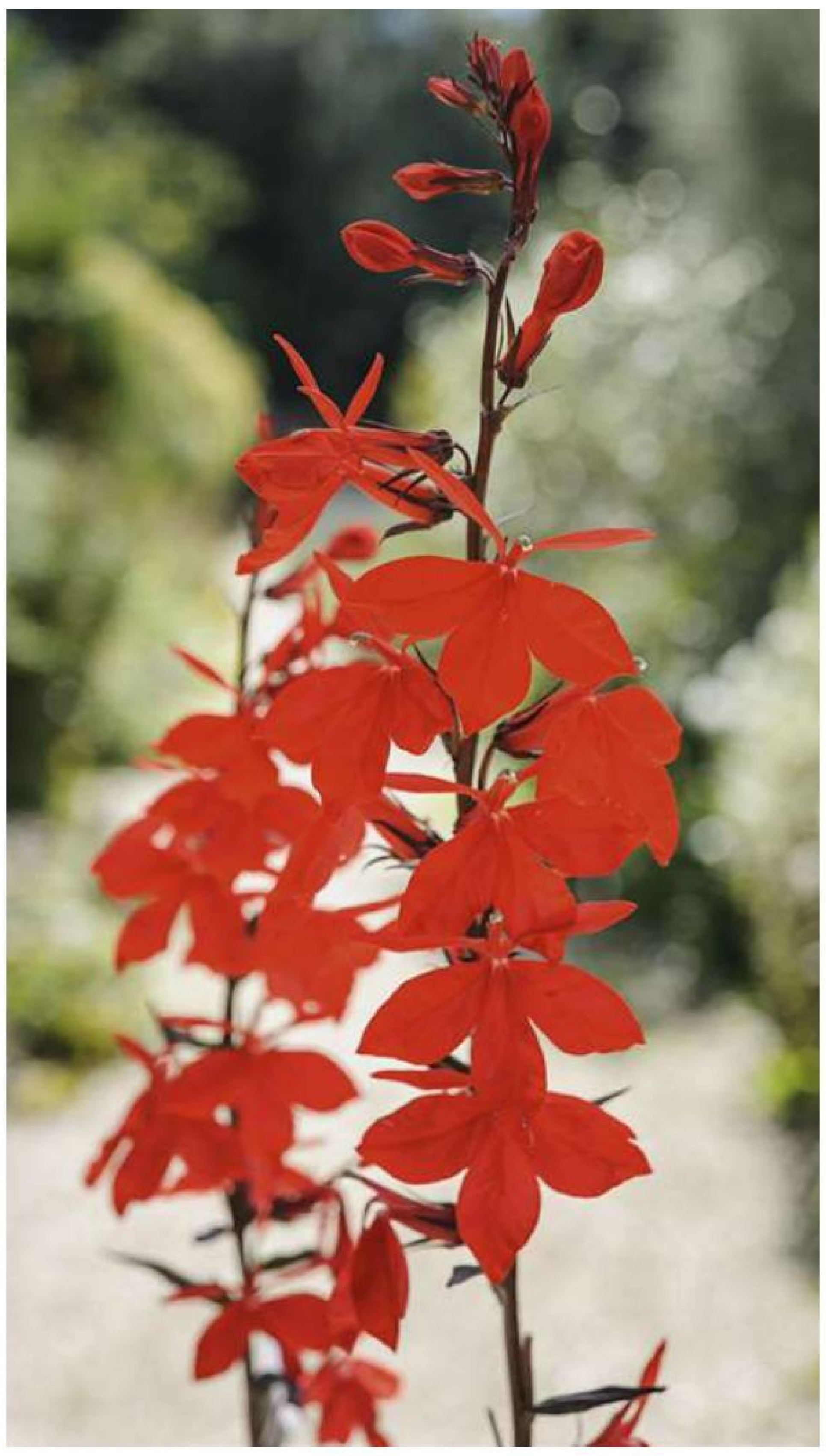


JASON INGRAM

LOBELIA CARDINALIS 'BEE'S FLAME'

This perennial is one of the best reds for the garden, and the effect is all the better for the dark-bronze foliage. Its habit is quite narrow and upright, so put plants close together – cheek-by-jowl – to make a coherent display. It's not reliably hardy and should be lifted and overwintered in a cold frame. Pot on in spring and plant out into soil improved with compost, as you would for late-summer bedding. This plant resents drying out and should be protected from slugs. A short cane for support might also be helpful.

Height 1.5m.
Origin Garden origin, originally Canada and USA.
Conditions Best in rich, moist soil in full sun to partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 3a-9b.
Season August to September. **MR**

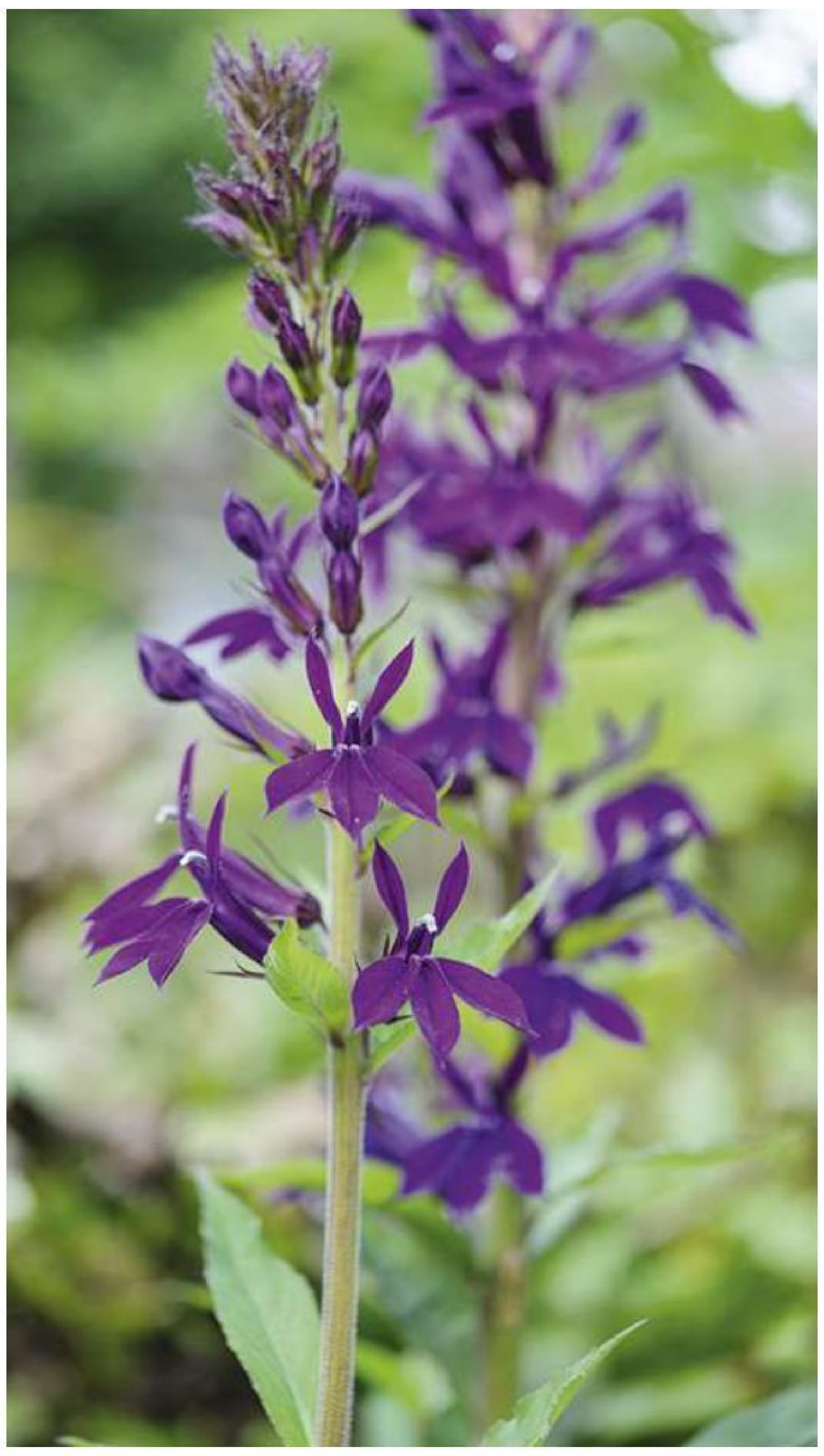
THIS LOBELIA SINGS OUT FROM ACROSS THE GARDEN WITH ITS RICH, DEEP-PURPLE FLOWERS

LOBELIA X *SPECIOSA* 'HADSPEN PURPLE'

LOBELIA X *SPECIOSA* 'HADSPEN PURPLE'

This perennial lobelia has the most glorious, rich, deep-purple flowers. The colour sings out from across the garden. As an added bonus, the bright-green foliage is often flushed purple. Bred by Nori and Sandra Pope at Hadspen House, it is a strong grower and not a martyr to slugs like so many lobelias. It loves rich, damp soil and sun. It is worth pandering to its whims in order to get that late-summer explosion of colour. Bees and butterflies love it, and so do I.

Height 70cm.
Origin Bred by Nori and Sandra Pope at Hadspen House in Somerset.
Conditions Good soil, not too dry in sun or light shade.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Season July to August. **DW**



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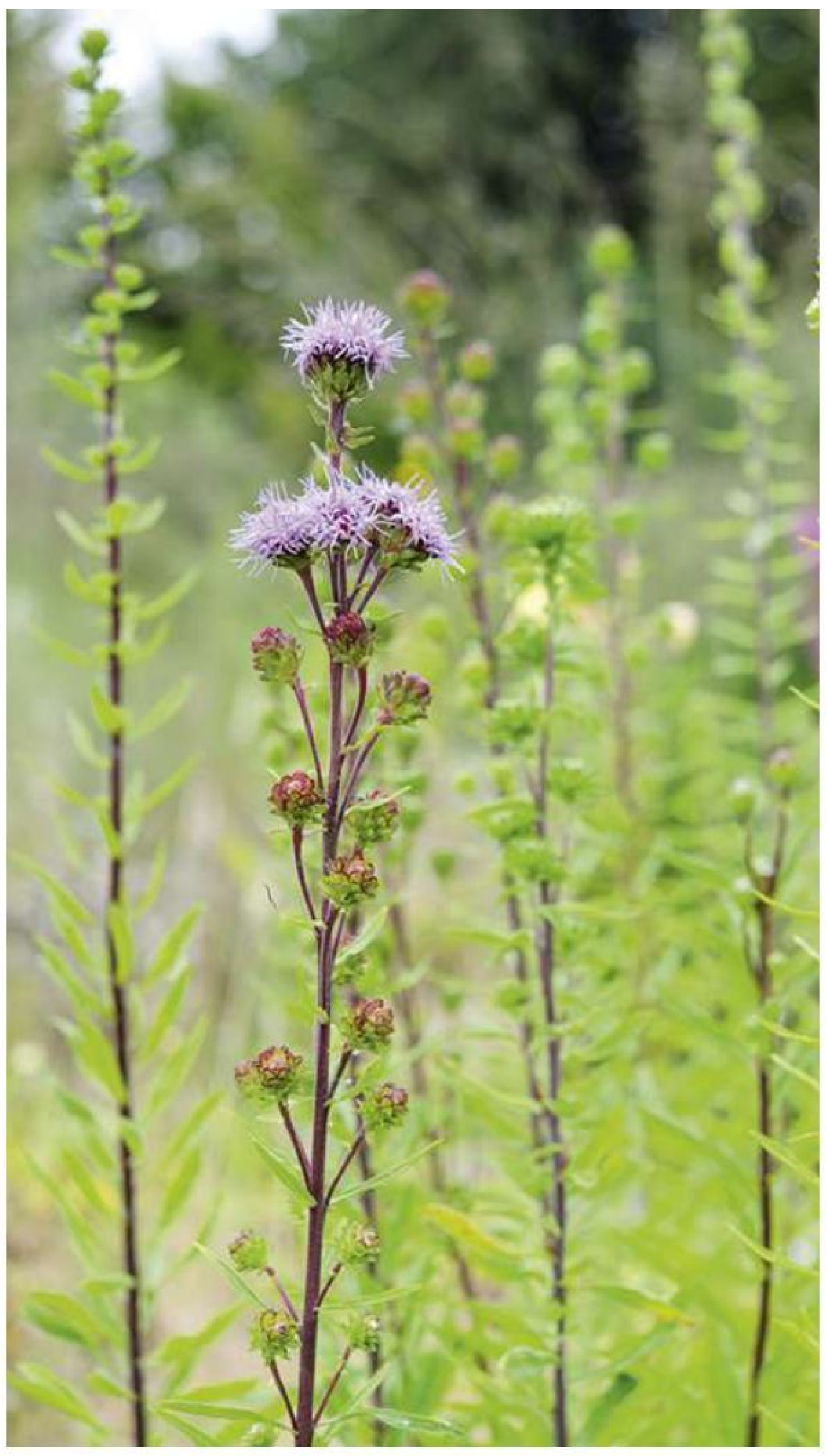


JASON INGRAM

LIATRIS SCARIOSA

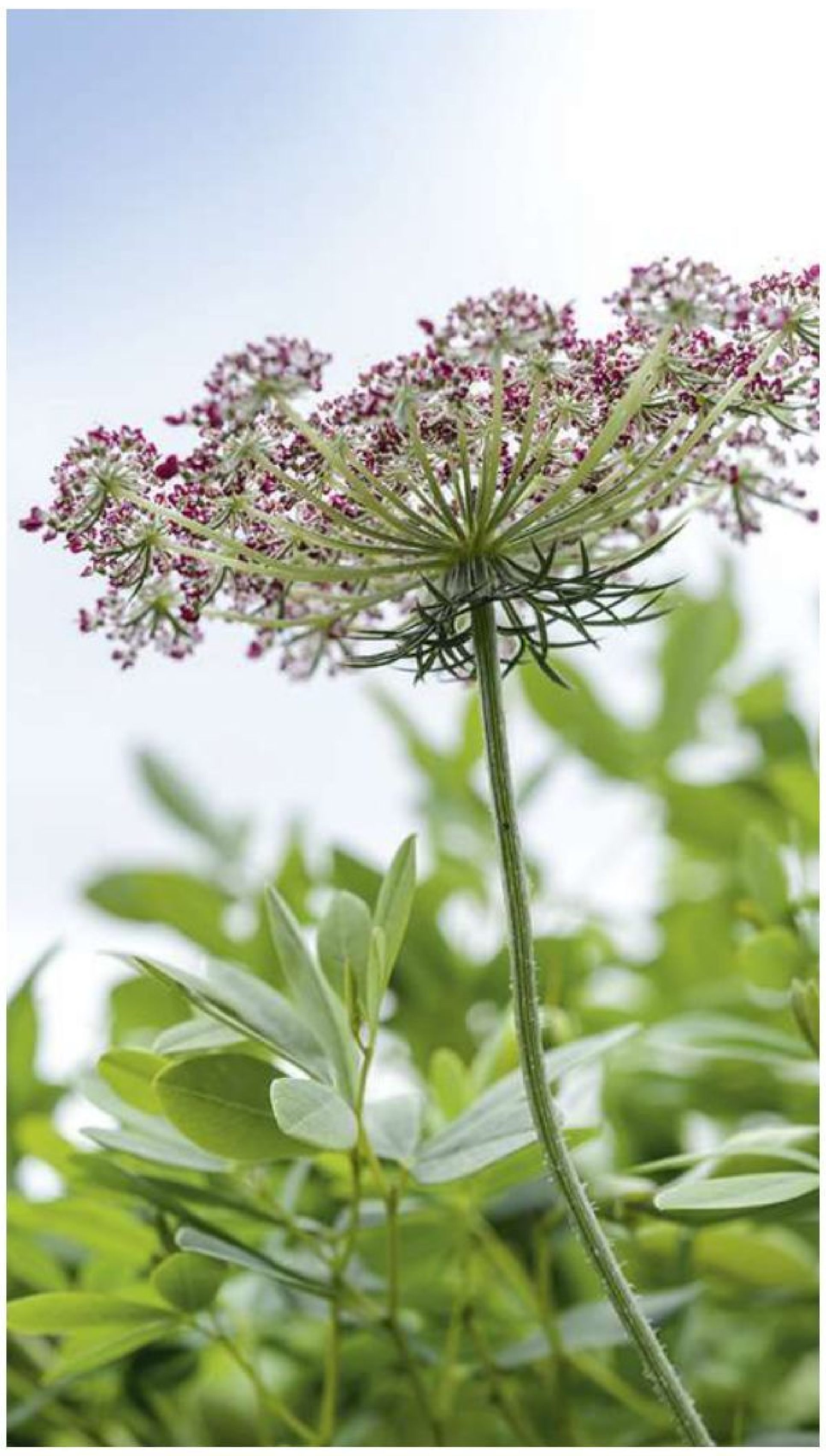
Also known as blazing stars or gayfeathers, *Liatris* are colourful components of dry prairies and woodlands, with showy spikes of flowers that are caviar to butterflies as well as other insects. They are unusual in that the flowers open from the top downwards. Of the 30-40 species in North America, few are grown in British gardens and to my mind most are inferior to *Liatris scariosa*, which should be better known. It has scaly buttons, well separated along the flowering stem, often deep red mirroring the flower-bud scales. Fluffy, pinkish-purple, daisy-like flowers open in summer.

Height 60cm-1.2m.
Origin Southeastern USA.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.
Season August. **MC**

DAUCUS CAROTA 'DARA'

I grew this ornamental carrot for the first time in 2013 since when it has rocketed in popularity. The wild carrot is a biennial with white flowers with a central dark spot mimicking an insect to entice visiting flies to pollinate. *Daucus carota* 'Dara' is an annual with reddish-purple umbels that are quite variable in colour and grown as a seed strain. It makes an unusual cut flower and will stand for several days in water. As the seedhead matures the outer umbel stems elongate, resulting in an almost cup-shaped form, colloquially known as 'bird's nest'.

Height 60-90cm.
Origin Europe, central Asia.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.
Season July to August. **MC**



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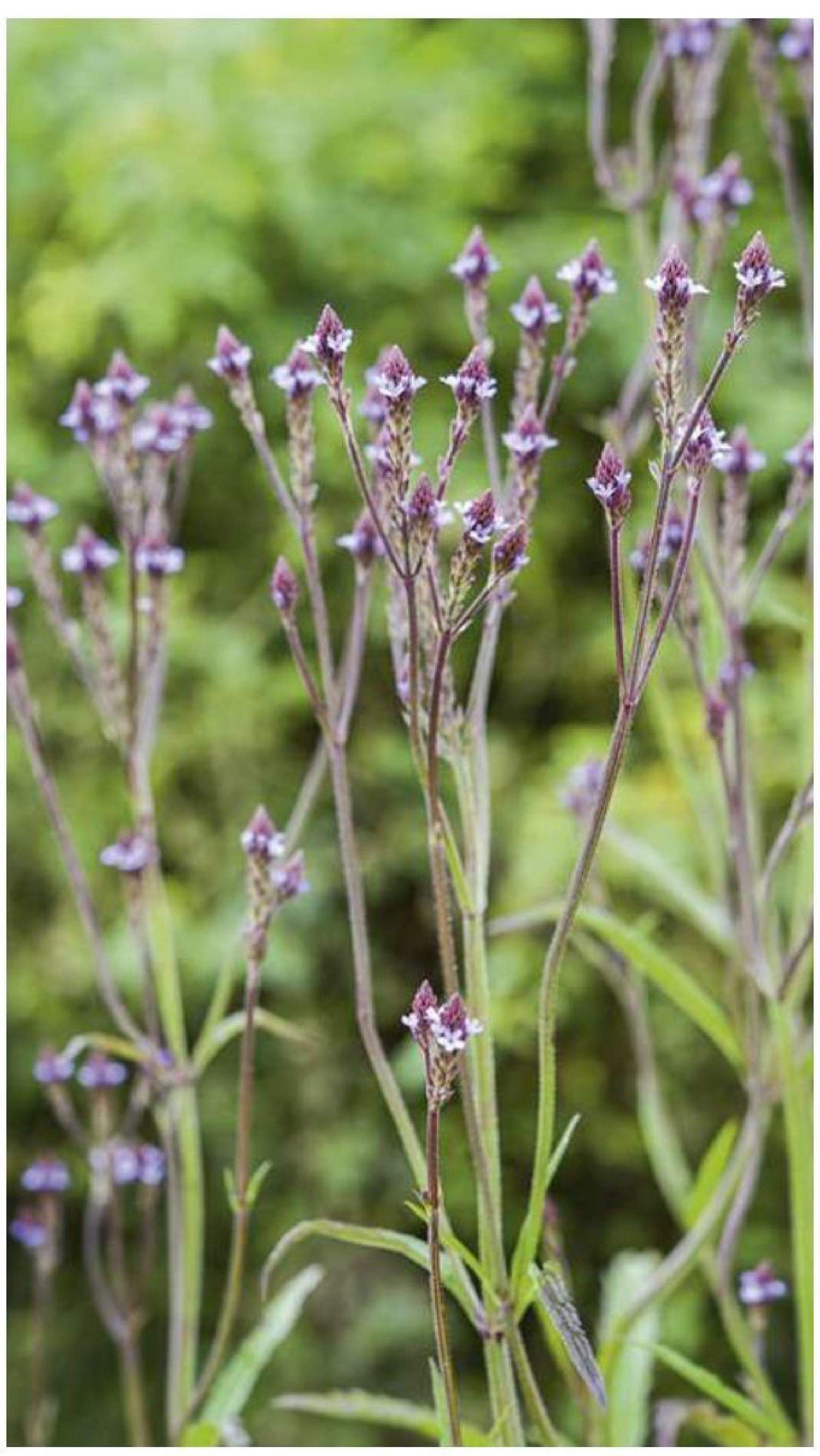


JASON INGRAM

VERBENA MACDOUGALII 'LAVENDER SPIRES'

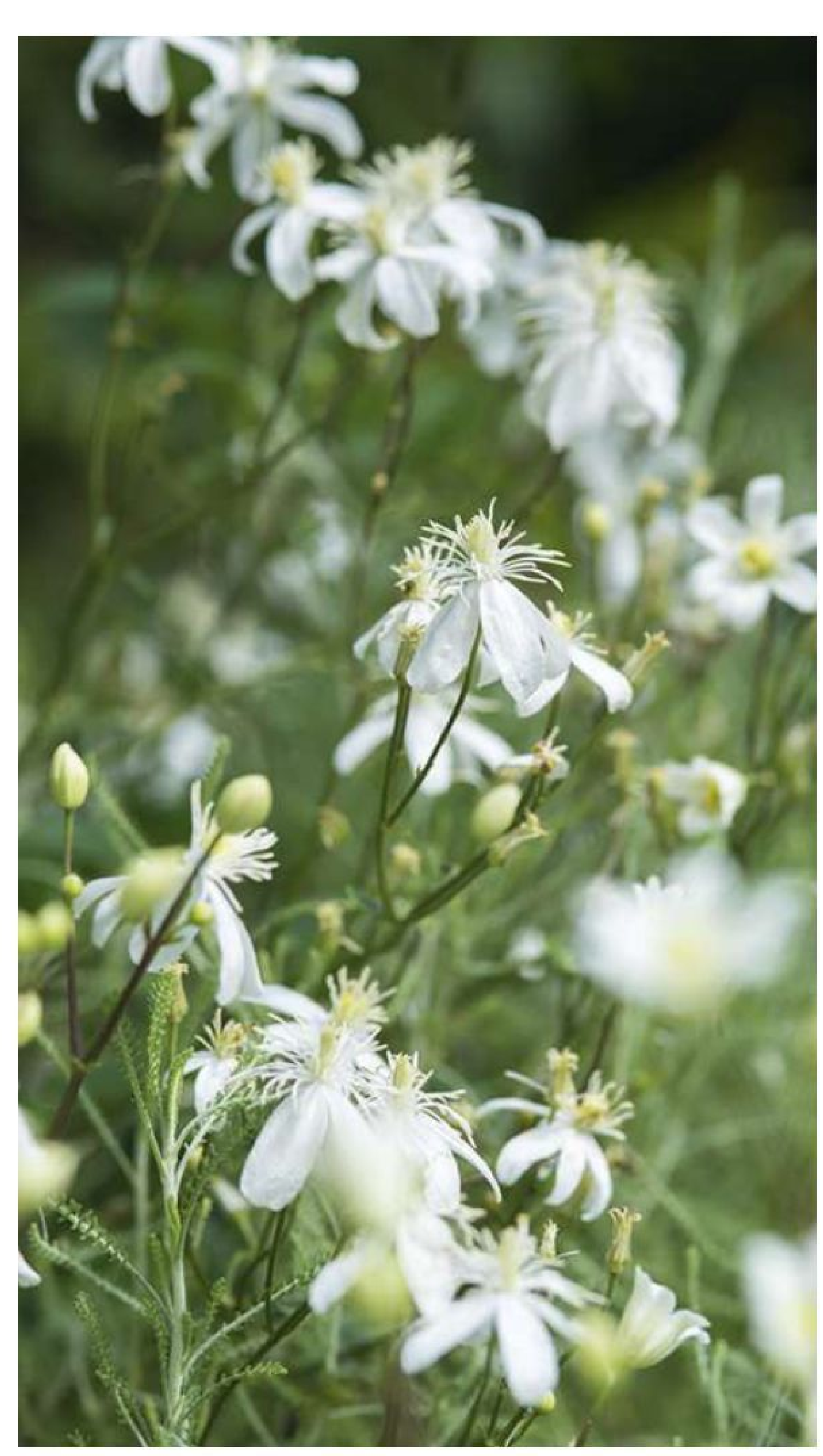
Observation is a key skill for gardeners and nurserymen for seeking out new garden-worthy plants. I was lucky enough to have sown a seed tray of *V. macdougalii* when I noticed one that differed from the other seedlings. It flowered for many months, did not look like *V. macdougalii*, was attractive to pollinators but set no seed. 'Lavender Spires' may be a sterile hybrid of *V. macdougalii* and *V. hastata*, a hardy, North American vervain, which has a short flowering season of two to three weeks and then makes copious seed. Although sterile, this still produces nectar.

Height 1.5m.
Origin Southwestern USA. Hybrid origin.
Conditions Good drainage in sun.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 4a-9b.
Season July to October. **MC**

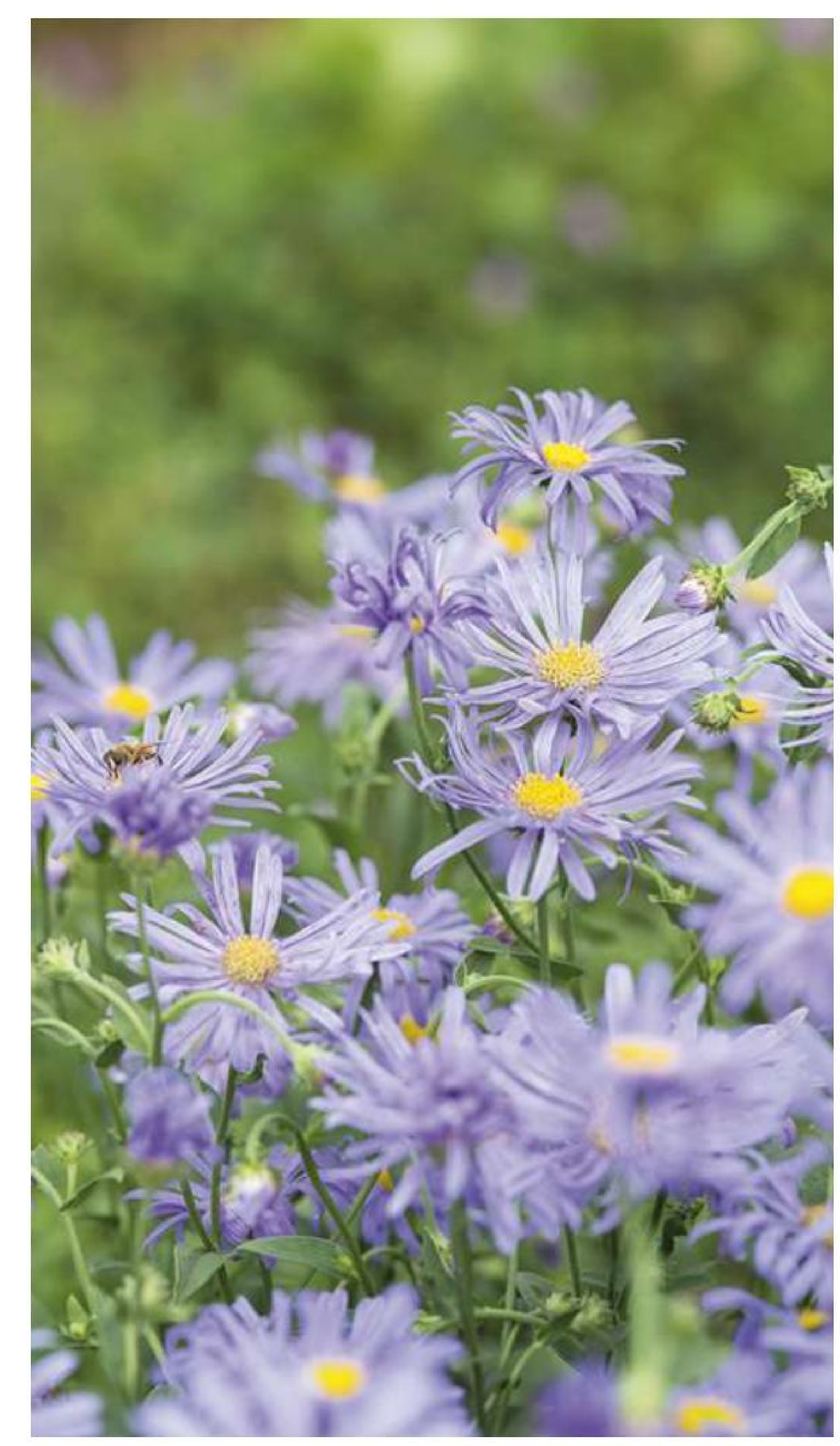
CLEMATIS 'PAMELA'

Don't confuse this with the better known *Clematis alpina* 'Pamela Jackman'. This cultivar was raised in the 1960s in Canada and is a hybrid of *Clematis recta* x *Clematis terniflora*, so a non-clinging cultivar. You rarely see it for sale, which I think is a real pity because I like it more than the species *Clematis recta*. The flowers are more substantial and it is less stiff, which means you may need to give it some support. Or you could just let it scramble through other perennials, such as *Eryngium* x *zabelii* 'Jos Eijking', to create a stunning effect.

Height 1.5m.
Origin Bred in Canada.
Conditions Fertile soil in full sun or partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.
Season August. **HK**



MAAYKE DE RIDDER



MAAYKE DE RIDDER

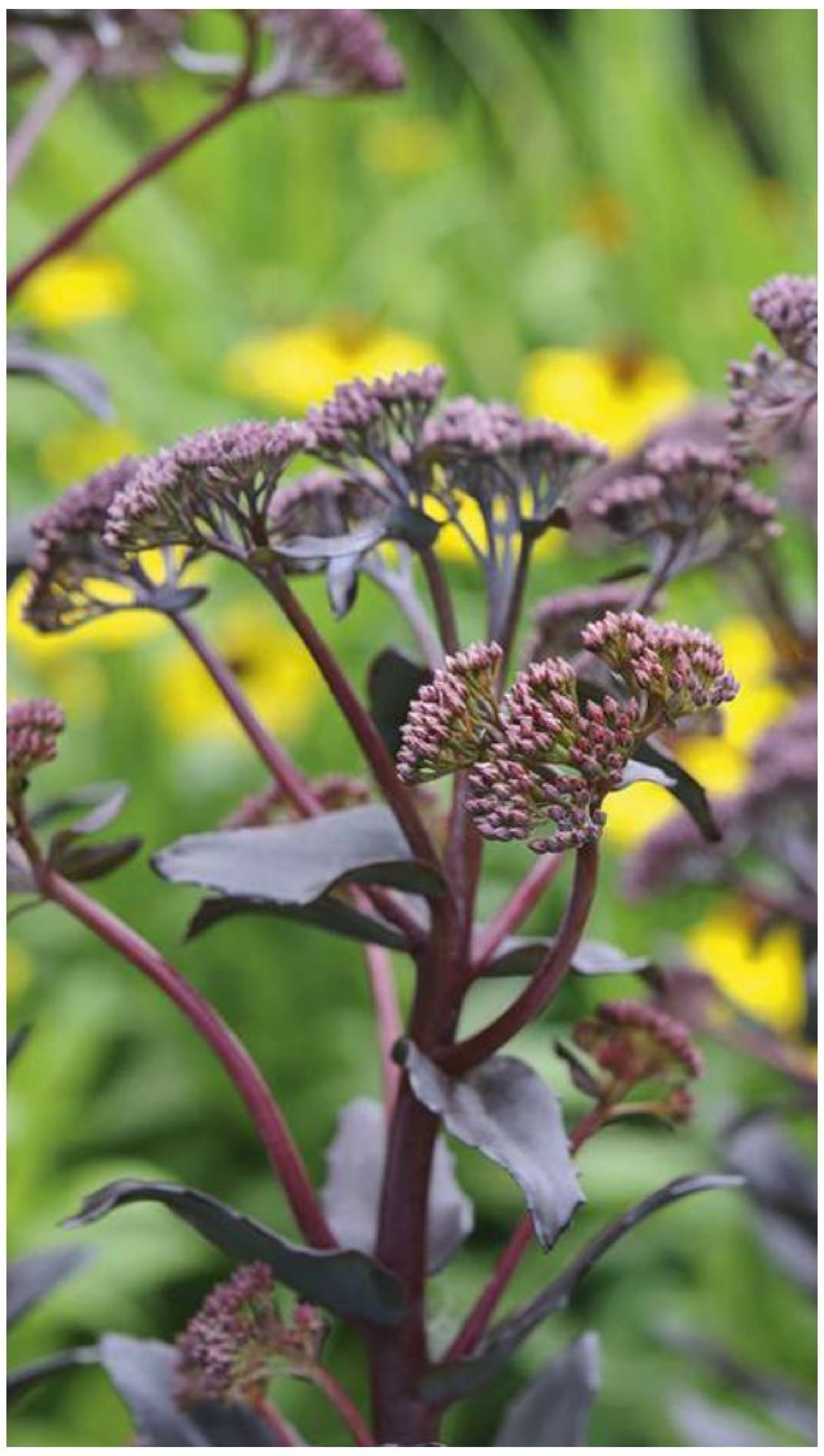
ASTER THOMSONII

This legendary plant, much praised in classic gardening books, was at one time thought lost to cultivation. We got hold of our seed from a Dutch seed bank and it seems to be the true plant. It is our longest-flowering aster, providing colour from July until November. Unsurprisingly, given it is one of the parent plants, it looks like a glorified *Aster* x *frikartii* 'Mönch', but is taller with larger flowers and woodier stems. It's also more likely to survive the winter than *A.* x *frikartii* 'Mönch', which can die in cold, heavy soils.

Height 80cm.
Origin Western Himalayas.
Conditions Light soil with good drainage in sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.
Season August to October. **HK**

YOU CAN ALMOST TASTE THE ICY MINT AND BITTERSWEET CHOCOLATE

DAHLIA 'TWYNING'S AFTER EIGHT'



JASON INGRAM

HYLOTELEPHIUM 'JOSÉ AUBERGINE'

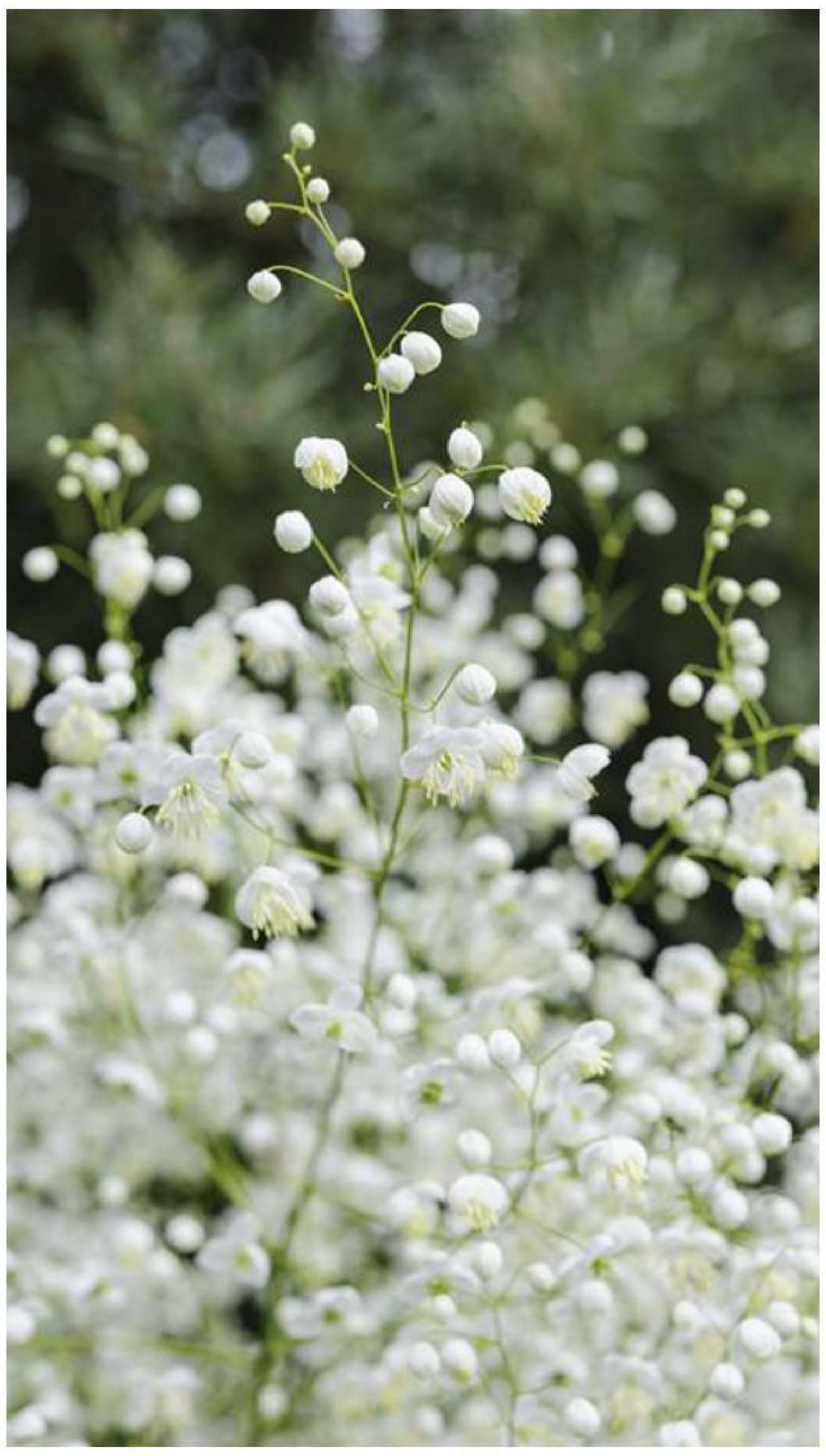
The trouble-free habits of most *Hylotelephium spectabile* (previously called *Sedum spectabile*) justify the energy invested in breeding new colourful varieties. *Hylotelephium* 'Matrona' introduced us to exciting beetroot-toned foliage, but had a tendency to get too tall for some spaces. Not so the newer *Hylotelephium* 'José Aubergine', which boasts the same colours, but has a slightly more stocky and manageable habit. I team this with *Penstemon* 'Andenken an Friedrich Hahn' and *Salvia verticillata* 'Smouldering Torches' in a south-facing border.

Height 50cm.
Origin Russia and China to Japan.
Conditions Well-drained garden loam in sun or partial shade.
Season August to December. **CM**

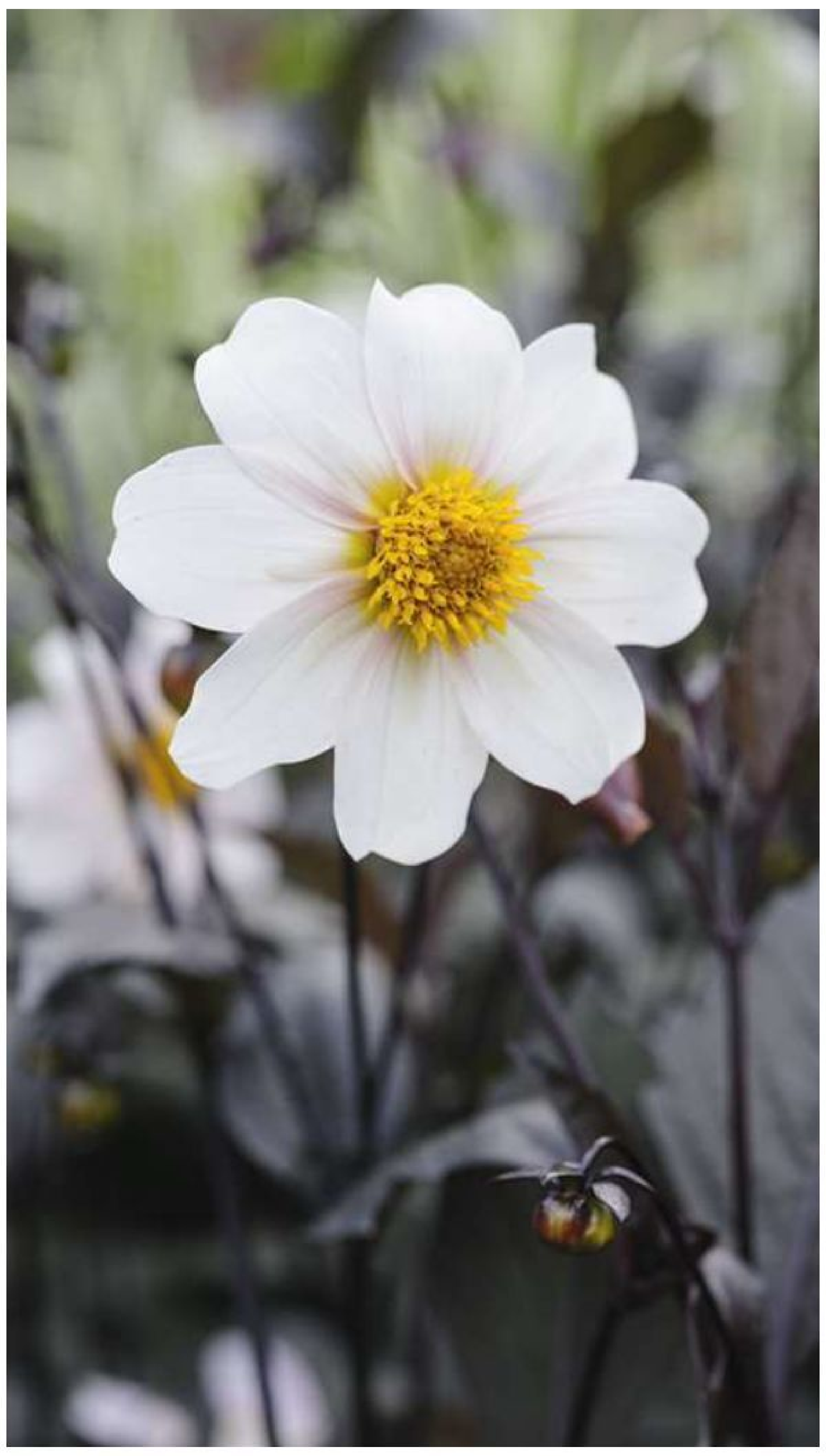
THALICTRUM DELAVAYI 'ALBUM'

An elegant, pure-white version of *Thalictrum delavayi*, the delicate maidenhair-fern-like leaves of this cultivar are a brighter green than the species. The airy foliage is delightful on its own, but then in July the whole plant is sprinkled with little round buds like pearls, which open out into ballerina skirts, the pure white petals flaring to reveal a cluster of pale cream anthers. In midsummer, when everything else in the garden is starting to look a bit tired, this plant remains as fresh and crisp as a May morning.

Height 1.3m.
Origin China.
Conditions Sun or light shade; good soil. Will need staking in shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.
Season July to August. **DW**



JASON INGRAM



JASON INGRAM

DAHLIA 'TWYNING'S AFTER EIGHT'

I like dark-leaved dahlias, especially this one, with creamy white flowers in spectacular contrast to its leaves. You can almost taste the icy mint and bittersweet chocolate. It is vigorous and tough, surviving winter after winter in my garden, in flower from July through October. Even the seedheads are attractive – shiny, dark and pointed. It doesn't need much staking, but it does grow big. Dark leaves can seem sombre but the simple white flowers keep this one ever cheerful. AGM.

Height 1.2m.
Origin Bred by Mark Twyning in UK.
Conditions Full sun; good soil. Mulch in winter, or lift tuber and store in frost-free conditions.
Hardiness RHS H3.
Season July to October. **DW**

JASON INGRAM

INDIGOFERA PENDULA

This plant has perhaps the most beautiful flowers of any shrub. Indigoferas are in the pea family and most of them produce masses of tiny pink flowers on this year's growth so they are pruned hard every spring, sending out vigorous young shoots smothered in flowers in midsummer. *Indigofera pendula* does that, but as the name suggests, the shoots are pendulous – long, slender racemes of pink flowers with tiny lavender-grey buds cascading down like wisteria. The old stems need some support to prevent them cascading down as well.

Height 2m.
Origin China.
Conditions Sun and good drainage in a sheltered position, not too windy.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 7a-10b.
Season July to August. **DW**

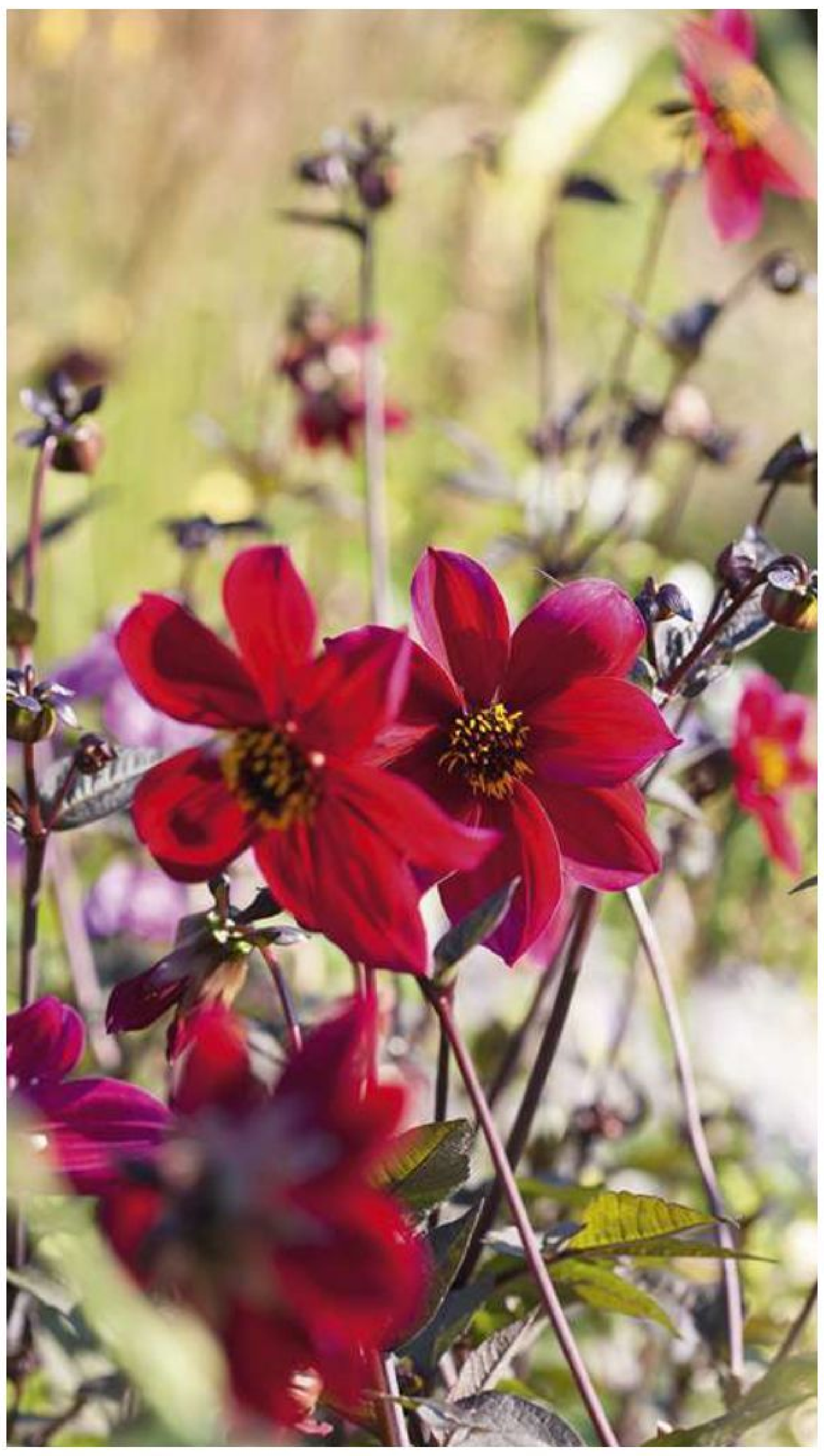
CRINKLED, PAPERY FLOWERS, THE SIZE OF A SAUCER, ENFOLD GOLDEN STAMENS

ROMNEYA COULTERI

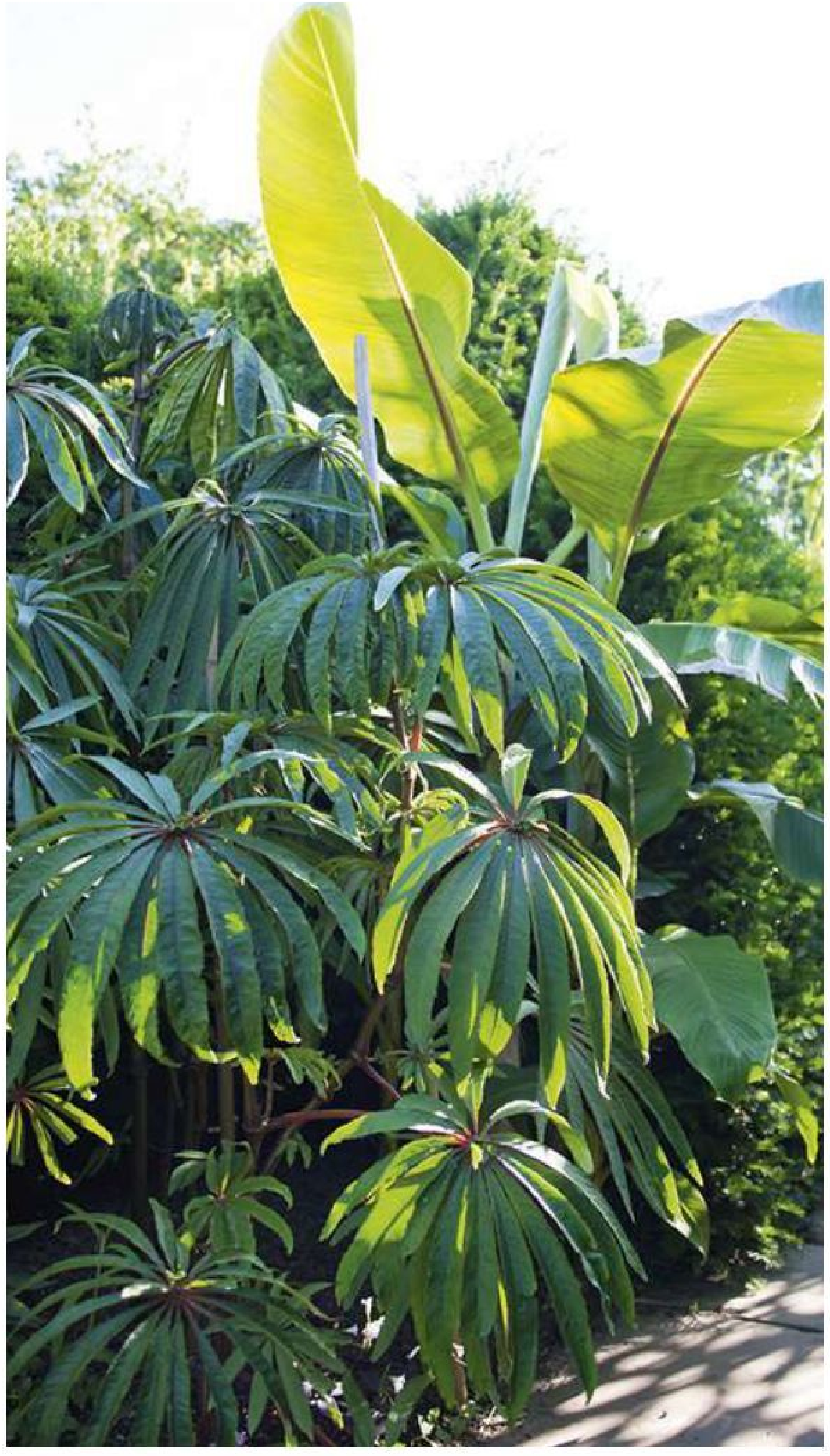
DAHLIA COCCINEA 'MARY KEEN'

Dahlia coccinea is a highly variable species in the wild and in cultivation. This superior form given to Great Dixter by Lady Mary Keen is tall, elegant but not too wispy and wonderfully robust, making a dramatic show of ruby-red flowers above filigree, rich-green leaves. The single flowers are delicately nodding, giving the plant a bashful and self-conscious expression making it ideal for an informal situation. The flowers are free and not stiff with an overlapping ring of long, gently twisting ray florets incurved around a central yellow disc and carried on long stems.

Height 2m.
Origin Species is indigenous to Mexico.
Conditions Good soil in full sun.
Season July to the first frosts. **FG**



SHARON PEARSON



SHARON PEARSON

BEGONIA LUXURIANS

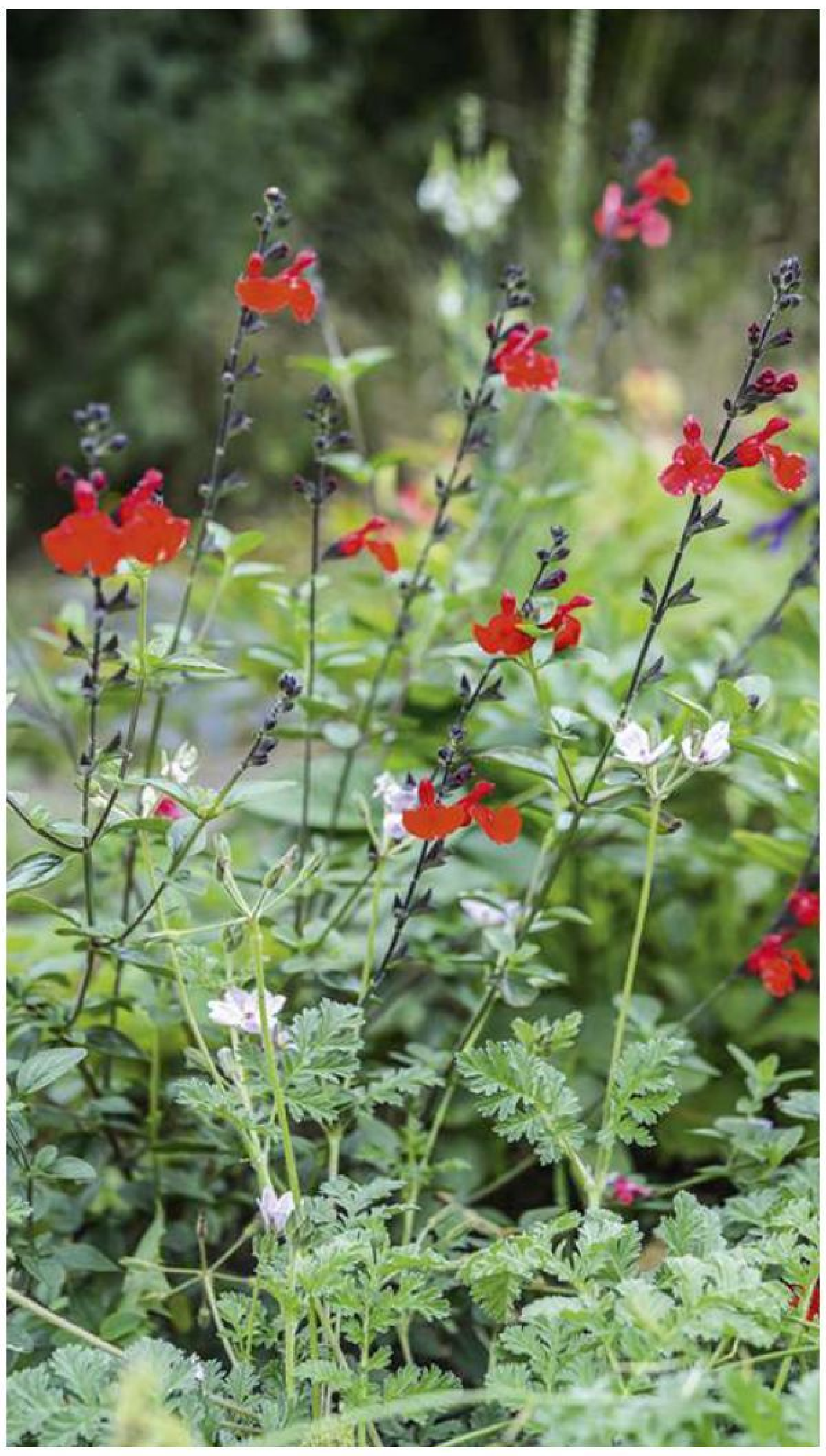
Sturdy upright canes support a zig-zag of alternating side branches, each with large, finely dissected palmate leaves comprising a dozen or so thin, drooping fingers. The whole plant is rippled with hairs, and has reddish undertones to the stems and the undersides of leaves. The effect is not too dissimilar to a herbaceous palm tree – plants in Great Dixter's Exotic Garden are often mistaken for miniature palms. Loose clusters of cream flowers emerge from a lacework of small globular buds. AGM.

Height 2m.
Origin Rainforests of Brazil.
Conditions Moist, well-drained soil in dappled shade. In the UK it needs a hothouse in winter.
Hardiness RHS H1B, USDA 10a-11.
Season Year-round as a foliage plant. **FG**

SALVIA 'ROYAL BUMBLE'

In a recent shrubby sage trial at RHS Wisley, this stood out from the others with its sumptuous, glowing red flowers, contrasting dark purple-black calyces and stems over healthy mid-green foliage. In its native Mexico, it would be pollinated by hummingbirds; here in the UK bees are more than happy to fulfil the pollinator role. It is a reasonably hardy plant given good drainage, although severe frosts may cut it to ground level, with new shoots emerging from the rootstock later in the spring. Untidy growth can be pruned back to create a better shape. AGM.

Height 60-90cm.
Origin Selection from *Salvia microphylla*.
Conditions Sharp drainage in sun.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.
Season July to October. **MC**



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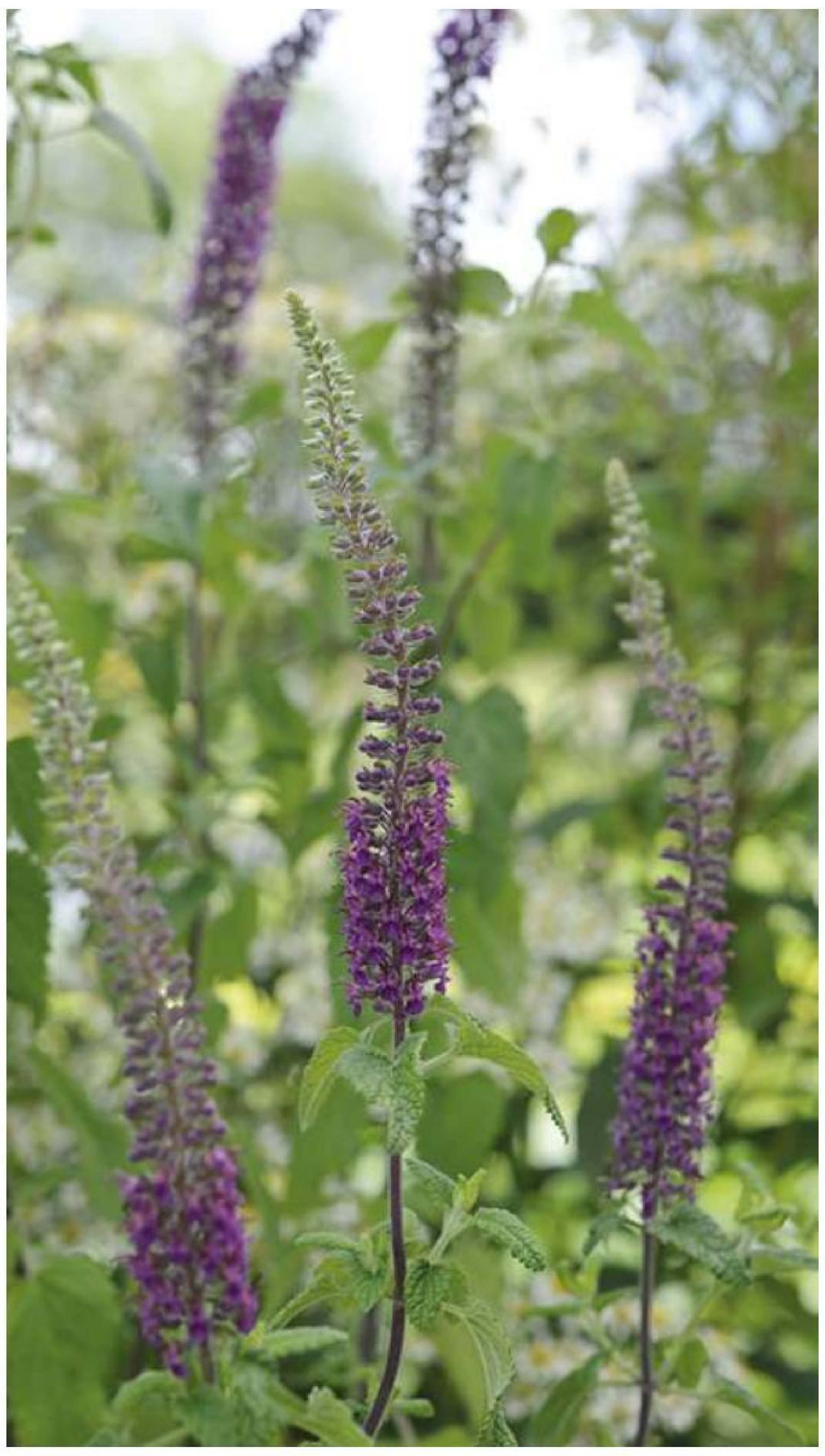


JASON INGRAM

TEUCRIUM HIRCANICUM 'PARADISE DELIGHT'

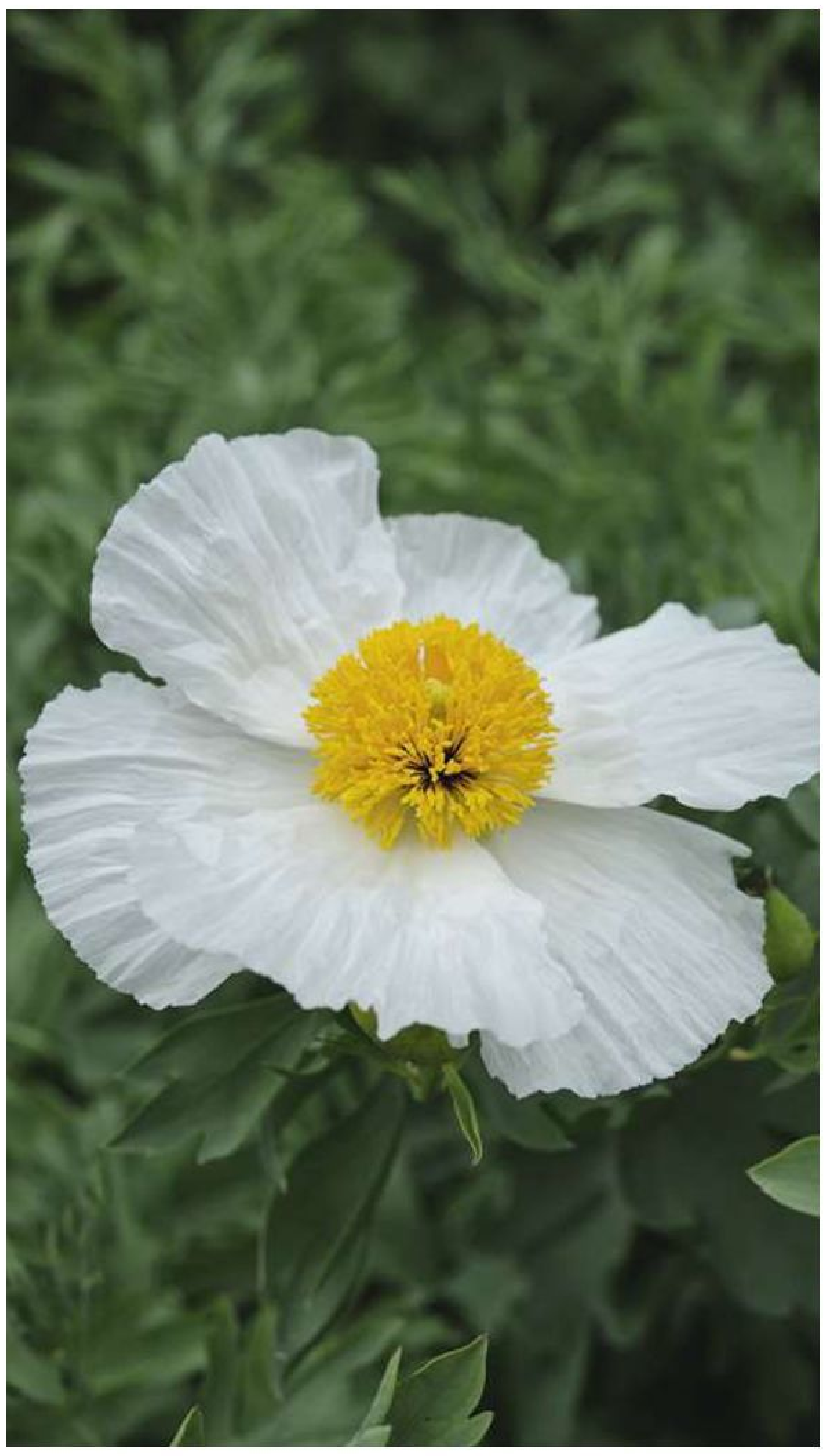
Standing over an expansive planting of this *Teucrium* in flower brings to mind a host of firework sparklers. Each stem supports an elongated lime-green spike, opening to rosy purple flowers from the base upwards. I turn to this plant in massed border plantings to provide structure and texture into the winter months. Spurning stakes, and demanding no special pruning, the effect is both impressive and easy. Be sure to leave spent flowerheads standing through winter frosts to give overwintering garden birds a pit-stop meal.

Height 55cm.
Origin Western Asia and Caucasus.
Conditions Most fertile garden loams.
Hardiness USDA 5a-8b.
Season July to October. **CM**

ROMNEYA COULTERI

It may take a year or two, but once established, this plant has remarkable vigour. I have even watched it emerge from under the foundations of a wall to sprout triumphant on the sunnier side. Fragile, crinkled, papery flowers, the size of a saucer, enfold golden stamens, which belie its iron constitution. In appearance, it resembles a host of fried eggs. There is a perfect partnership between *R. coulteri* and a fine-walled garden, but even if you have just a small section of brick, it will be all the finer for the addition of this plant. AGM.

Height 2m.
Origin Native of southern California.
Conditions Well-drained neutral to alkaline loam.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.
Season July to August. **CM**



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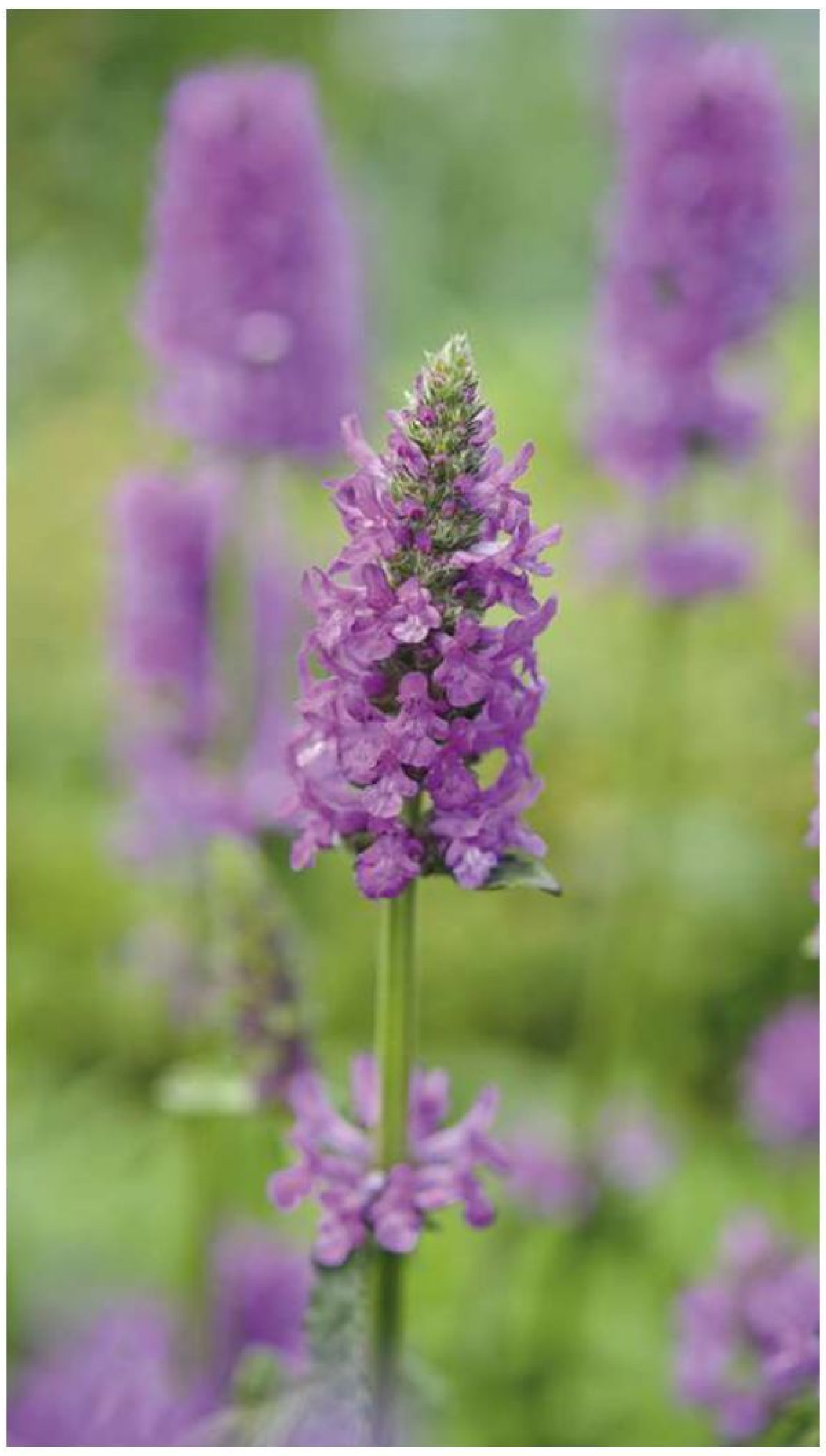


JASON INGRAM

STACHYS OFFICINALIS 'HUMMELO'

A frequent host to butterflies, this versatile and tolerant plant will flower in spite of thin, poor soil. Tightly formed, rosy, purple blooms, similar to our native early purple orchid, stand tall for many weeks, their final height dependent on moisture levels and nutrients. I've used plants with equal success in the middle of a low-maintenance shrub framework and on the edge of an informal, damp meadow. Try planting with forms of *Origanum laevigatum* to draw more insects. AGM.

Height 50cm.
Origin Europe, north Africa and western Asia.
Conditions Prefers well-drained, warm soil, but is tolerant of low-nutrient soils.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.
Season June to August with a potential second flush in September to October. **CM**

JASON INGRAM

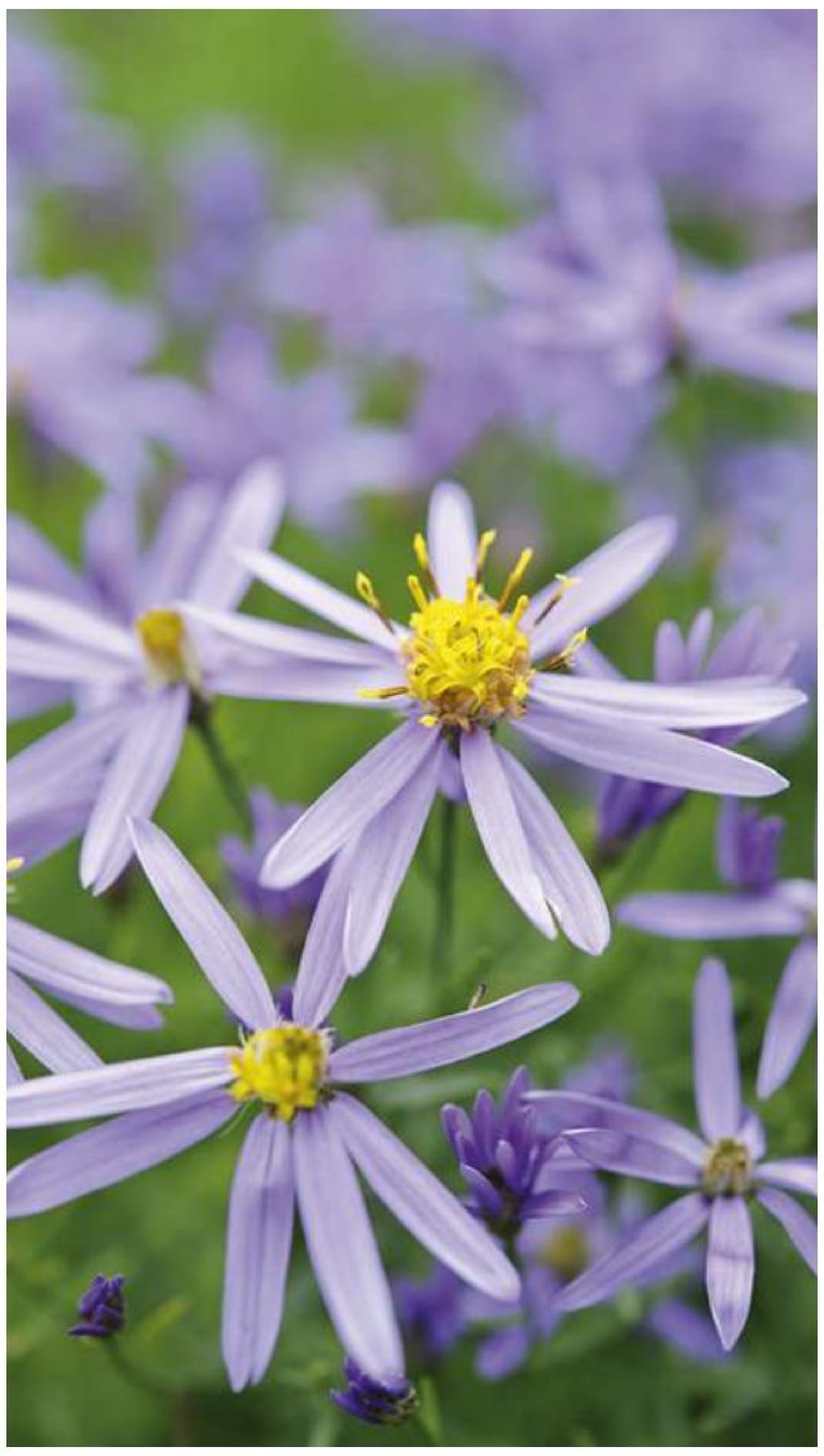
HELIANTHUS 'CARINE'

The horticulturist Graham Stuart Thomas once commented that he could not write about sunflowers 'with any enthusiasm', and described their brilliant yellows, coarse leaves and need for staking with an air of disdain. He might have changed his mind had this perennial sunflower been around in his day. It's different from the ubiquitous mustard-yellow flowers of the late-season border. The flowers are a lovely shade of soft primrose and are smaller and more numerous than those of other sunflowers. They are held on dark stems in loose clusters just above the foliage and will not run or require staking.

Height 1.4m.
Origin Garden origin, originally North America.
Conditions Good rich soil in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Season August to September. **MR**

IMPROBABLE METALLIC PURPLE LEAVES EXHIBIT STRIKING FISH-BONE VEINS

STROBILANTHES DYERIANA



JASON INGRAM

GALATELLA SEDIFOLIA 'NANA'

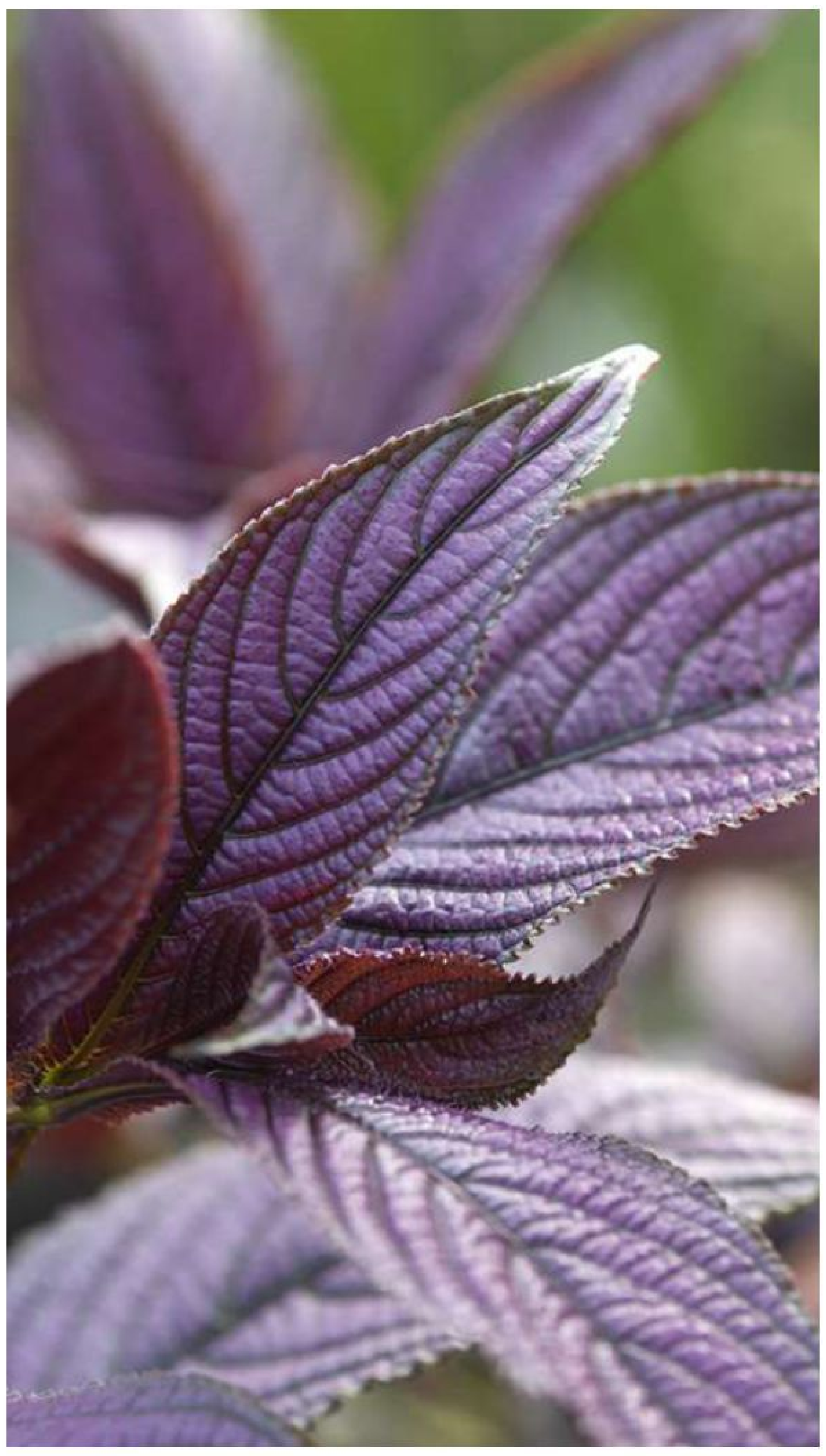
Front edges of borders get noticed, and unsightly dark spaces can be alarming. This slender upright aster is eminently suitable for a front-row position, ensuring colour into autumn. Reliable and mildew resistant, it requires little attention. Branched stems support plentiful composite flowers, opening to lavender blue in August. A bonus is the attractive wheaten structure which remains well after flowers fade. 'Nana' was first seen on the stony banks of Lake Baikal in Siberia, where it withstands prolonged harsh winter temperatures.

Height 40cm.
Origin South and east-central Europe to northern Asia.
Conditions Well-drained loam; open aspect.
Hardiness USDA 4a-7b.
Season August to September. **CM**

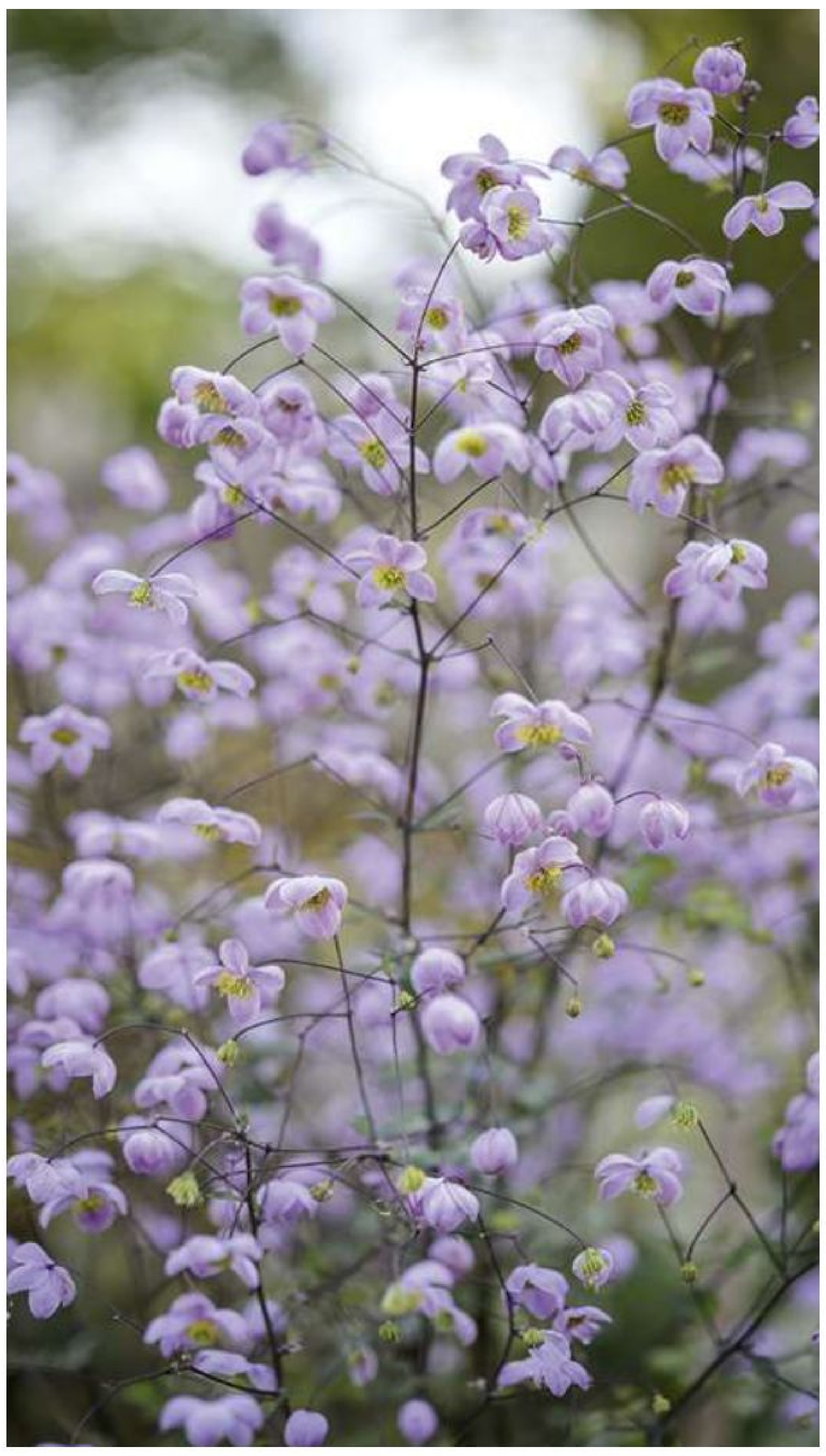
STROBILANTHES DYERIANA

If colour were the most important characteristic that foliage could offer the garden, this would be one of the stars. The leaves have an improbable metallic purple colouring and have striking fish-bone veins. Because it's from the tropics it recovers from winter late – July is normal – but is useful in the garden until the end of October. Then I move the pot somewhere warm and bright. By April they look awful but recover. The flowers sometimes occur just before winter but are unimportant. AGM.

Height 75cm.
Origin Myanmar.
Conditions Grow in a container in sun or half-shade with other pots and compose wonderful symphonies. Any soil type.
Hardiness RHS H1B, USDA 10a-12.
Season July to October. **BB**



TORIE CHUGG



JASON INGRAM

THALICTRUM 'SPLENDIDE'

This lovely meadow rue is a recent introduction that appeared spontaneously in the garden of French nurseryman Thierry Delabroye. It is thought to be a hybrid between two Chinese species *T. delavayi* and *T. elegans*. As it is a sterile hybrid, it flowers for several weeks longer than either of its parents, providing vast clouds of small, purplish-pink flowers with creamy stamens that contrast with dark, reddish-purple stems. It can grow so tall and flower so profusely that it becomes top heavy and requires judicious staking.

Height 1.8m.
Origin Hybrid of *T. delavayi* and *T. elegans*.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.
Season July to September. **MC**

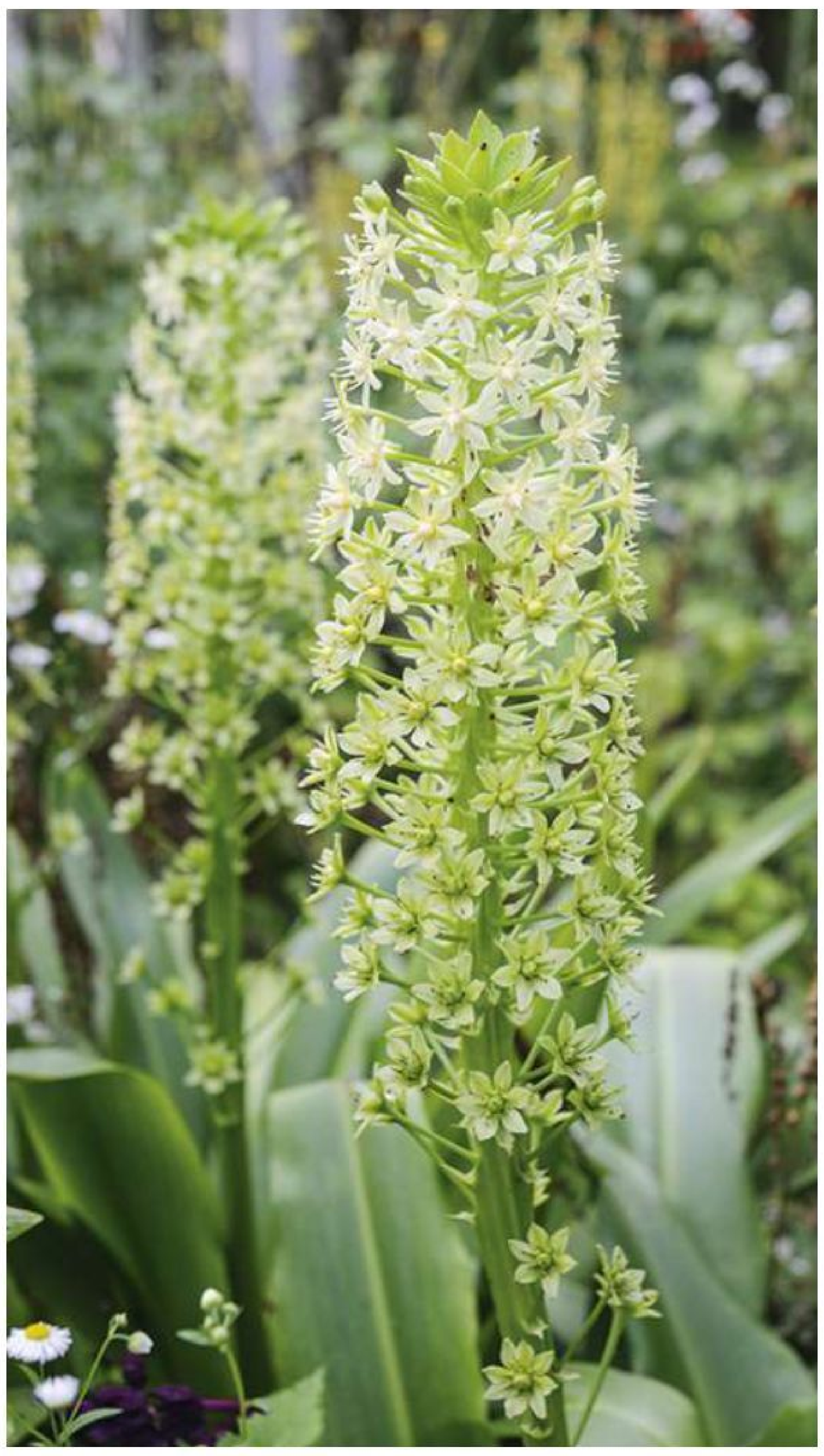
HARDY, LUSTY BLOOMS EMIT THE UNEXPECTED PERFUME OF SWEET VIOLETS

APIOS AMERICANA

EUCOMIS PALLIDIFLORA

This plant has tall flower columns that shoot up from the centre of large, basal rosettes of long, fleshy leaves. The columns are composed of small, starry, mother-of-pearl green blooms culminating in a top-knot of pineapple-like tufts of leaves. I first saw it at Sissinghurst planted with *Hylotelephium spectabile* (then named *Sedum spectabile*) and *Pennisetum alopecuroides*, which was a superb and measured combination of colour, texture and form. The bulbs are massive and should be planted with the nose of the bulb just kissing the surface of improved soil that doesn't sit too wet during colder months. AGM.

Height 1.2m.
Origin South Africa.
Conditions Rich, moist soil in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 8a-10b.
Season August to September. **MR**



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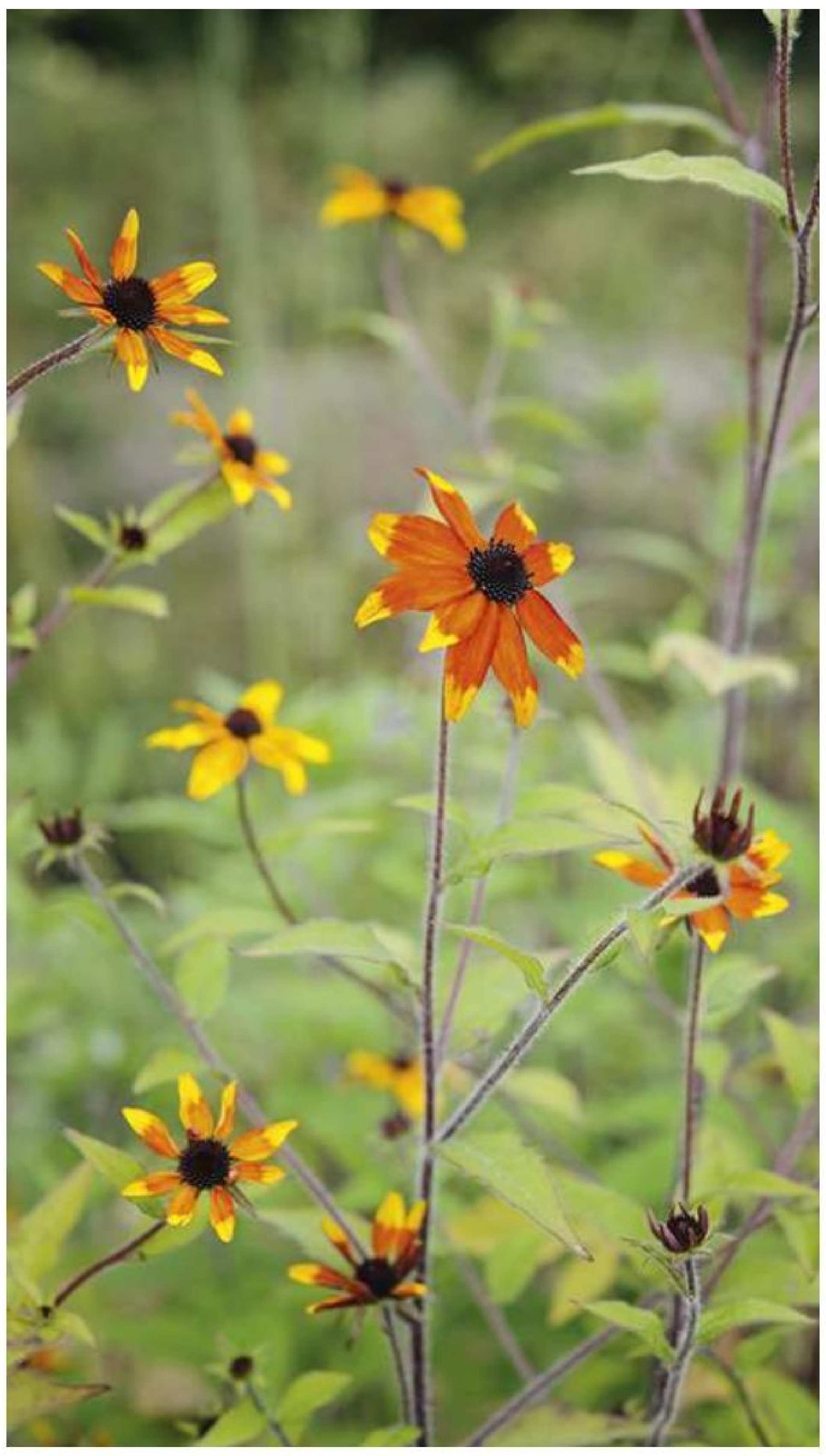


JASON INGRAM

RUDBECKIA TRILOBA 'PRAIRIE GLOW'

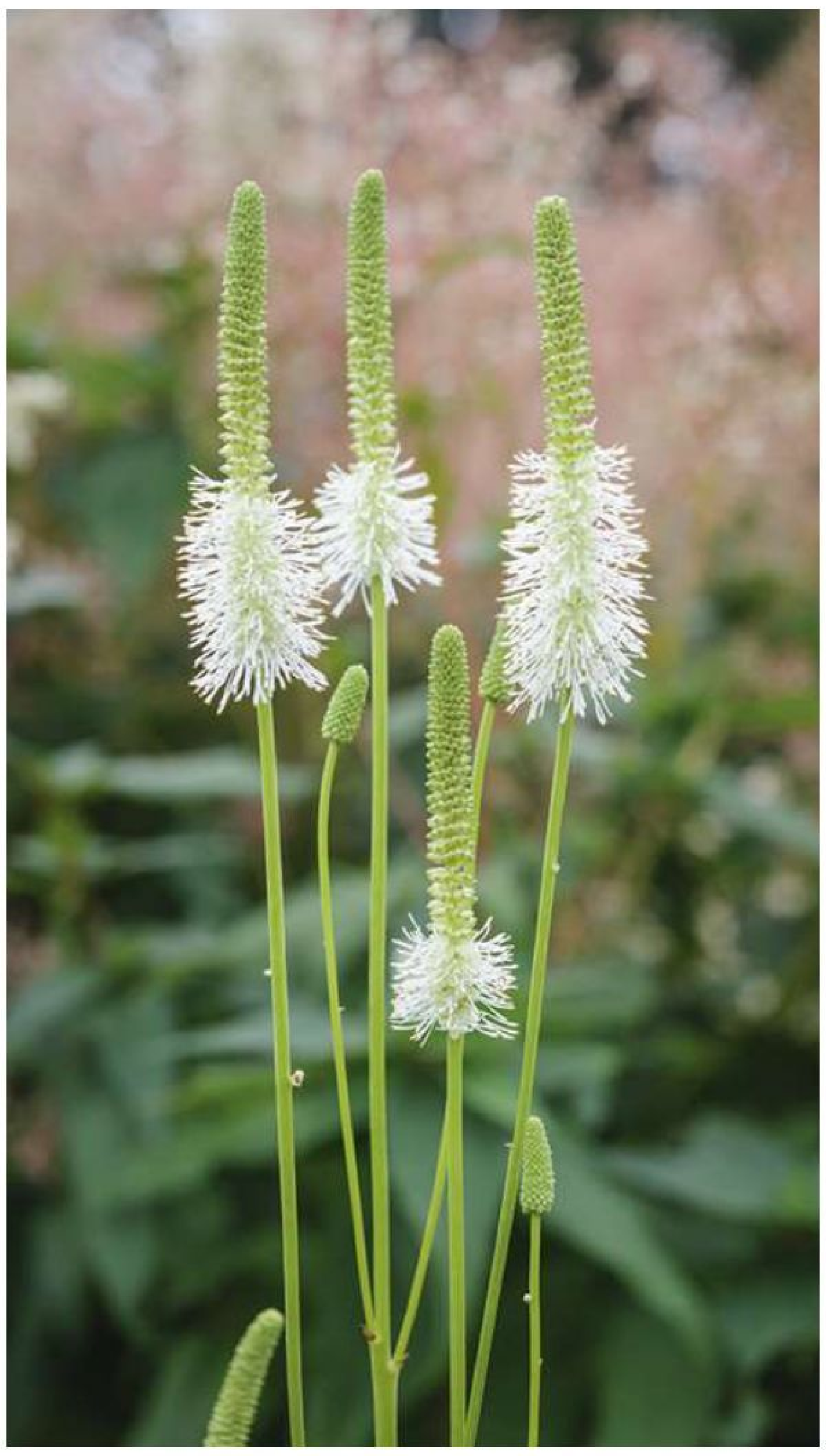
This delightful yellow daisy has a dark eye and is colloquially named brown-eyed Susan. It has smaller flowers than most rudbeckias but is tall with an airy, branched growth and multitudes of daisies in late summer. This seed strain, which was introduced in 2010, has striking dark-red stems and flowers that start off yellowish-orange with the orange and rusty hues deepening as the blooms mature and the temperature decreases. It mixes well with tall grasses, as they fade into their autumn finery, but is short-lived.

Height 1.5m.
Origin Central-eastern USA.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil, not too dry.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.
Season September to October. **MC**

SANGUISORBA CANADENSIS

In the past few years burnets have rocketed in popularity with red, pink and white species and cultivars available. I've grown them for years and they are the most promiscuous plants I've ever known – hence the proliferation of named cultivars. An RHS trial of *Sanguisorba* that began in 2017 will help to assess the best for the garden, but this has already proved to be a fine species. It flowers in September with pristine, white candles emerging from erect, green, flower spikes. It is wind pollinated and the slightest breeze sets the long stamens dancing.

Height 1.5-2m.
Origin Eastern North America.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil in sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.
Season August to September. **MC**



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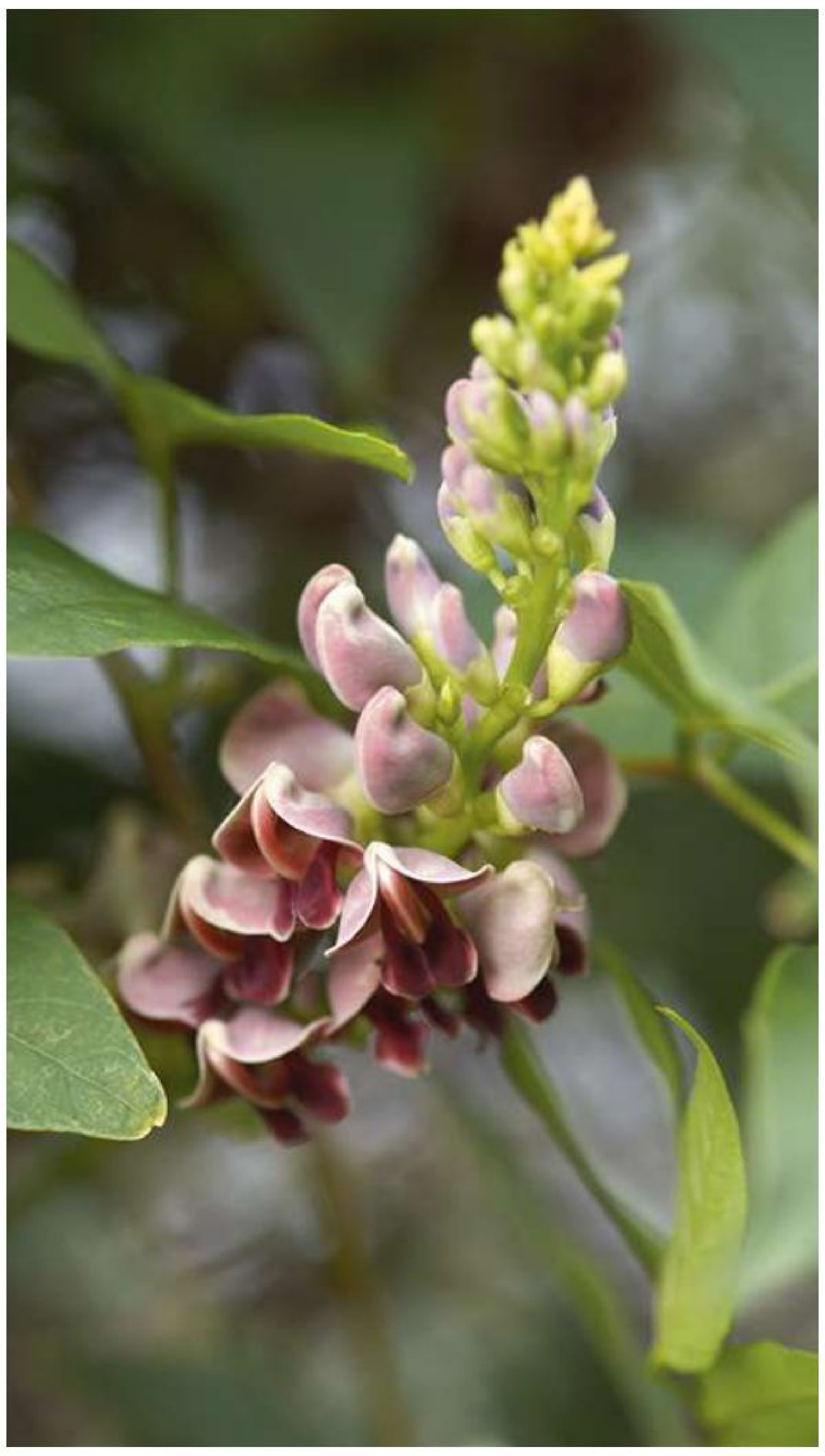


TORIE CHUGG

APIOS AMERICANA

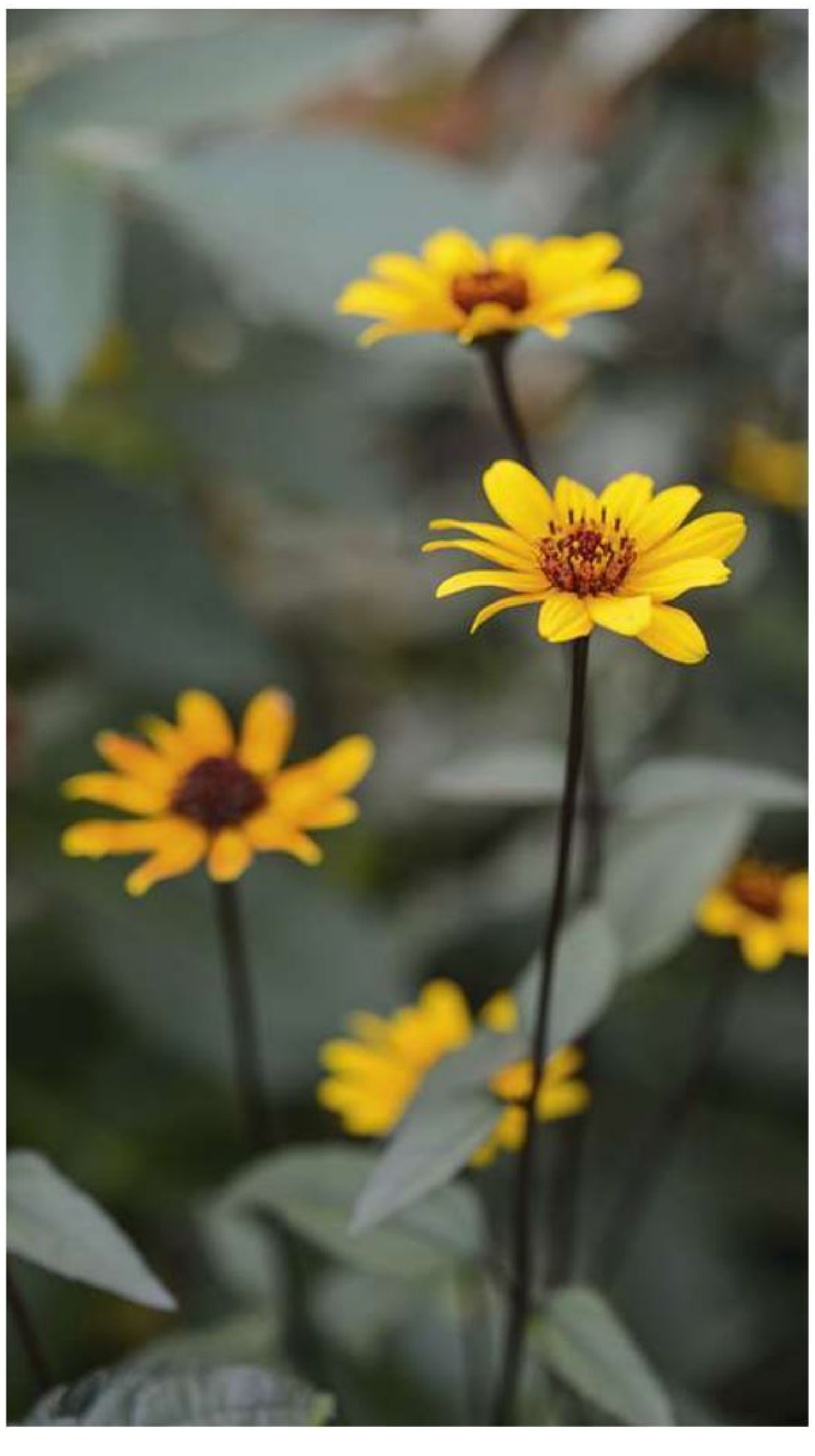
This is one of those plants you can't believe you've never seen before because it has so many advantages. It's a herbaceous twining climber with fresh new growth every season, is utterly hardy and has lusty blooms in a tired season and edible tubers (it's a traditional food of Native Americans). Its perfume of sweet violets is unexpected. It reached Europe as a garden plant in 1597 and was even trialled as a substitute for potatoes in the Irish potato famine. Why doesn't everyone grow it?

Height 3m.
Origin North America.
Conditions Plant beneath a sunny wall, to grow through other climbers that tend to be bare at the base, such as honeysuckle and jasmine. Any soil is fine.
Hardiness USDA 4a-9b.
Season August and early September. **BB**

HELIOPSIS HELIANTHOIDES VAR. *SCABRA* 'SUMMER NIGHTS'

This cheerful yellow daisy is a close relative of the sunflower, but with much smaller flowers. It is a rather leggy plant with deep mahogany-red stems and dark-green leaves with deep-yellow blooms and a contrasting orange eye that turns dark red on pollination. Spring foliage is usually suffused purple-red so it has a long season of interest. Its main drawback is that it is caviar to slugs and snails, and on my clay soil it is often razed to the ground as soon as the shoots emerge.

Height 1.2m.
Origin Raised by North Creek Nurseries, Pennsylvania, USA.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.
Season May to October. **MC**



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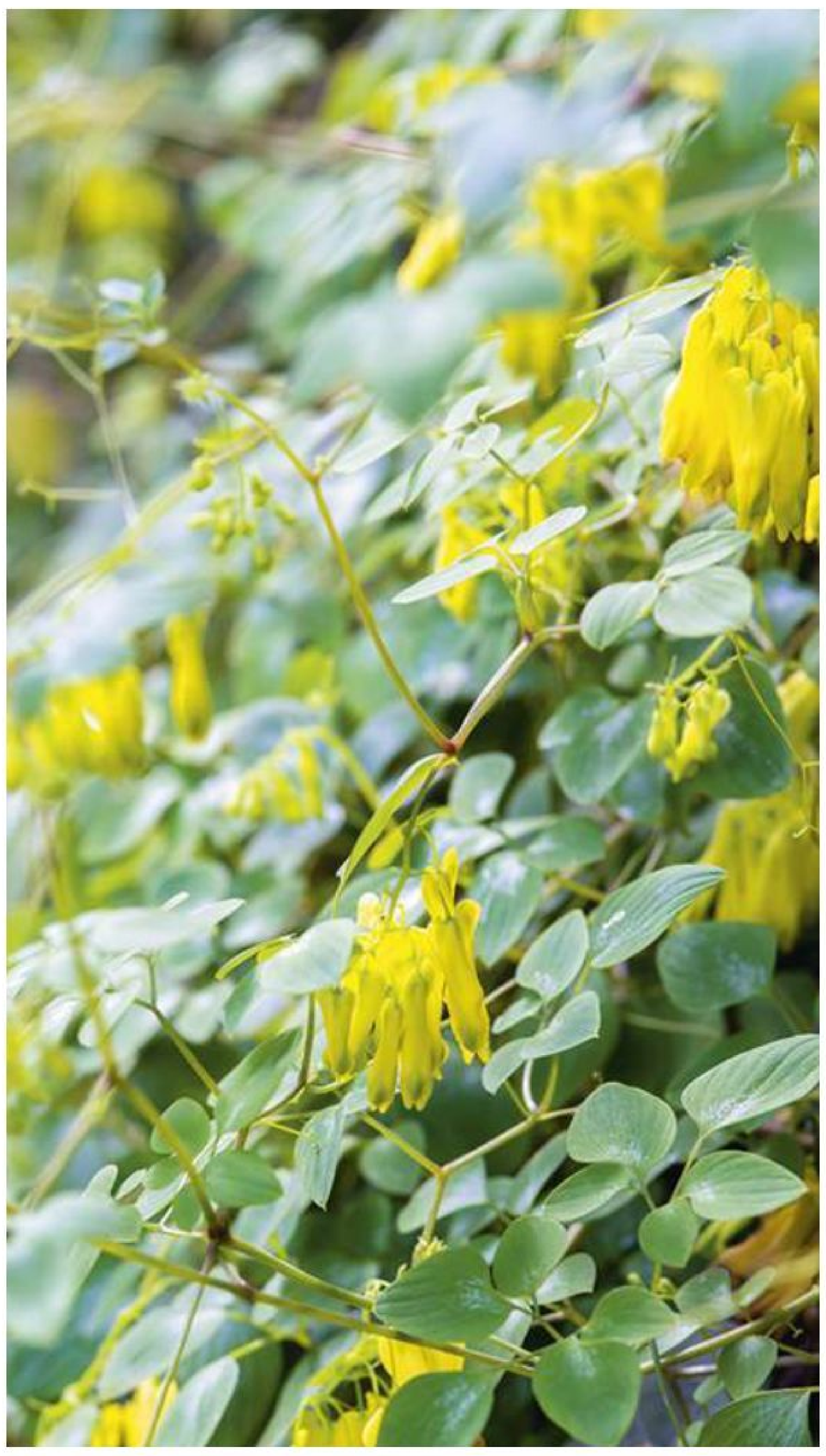


MAAYKE DE RIDDER

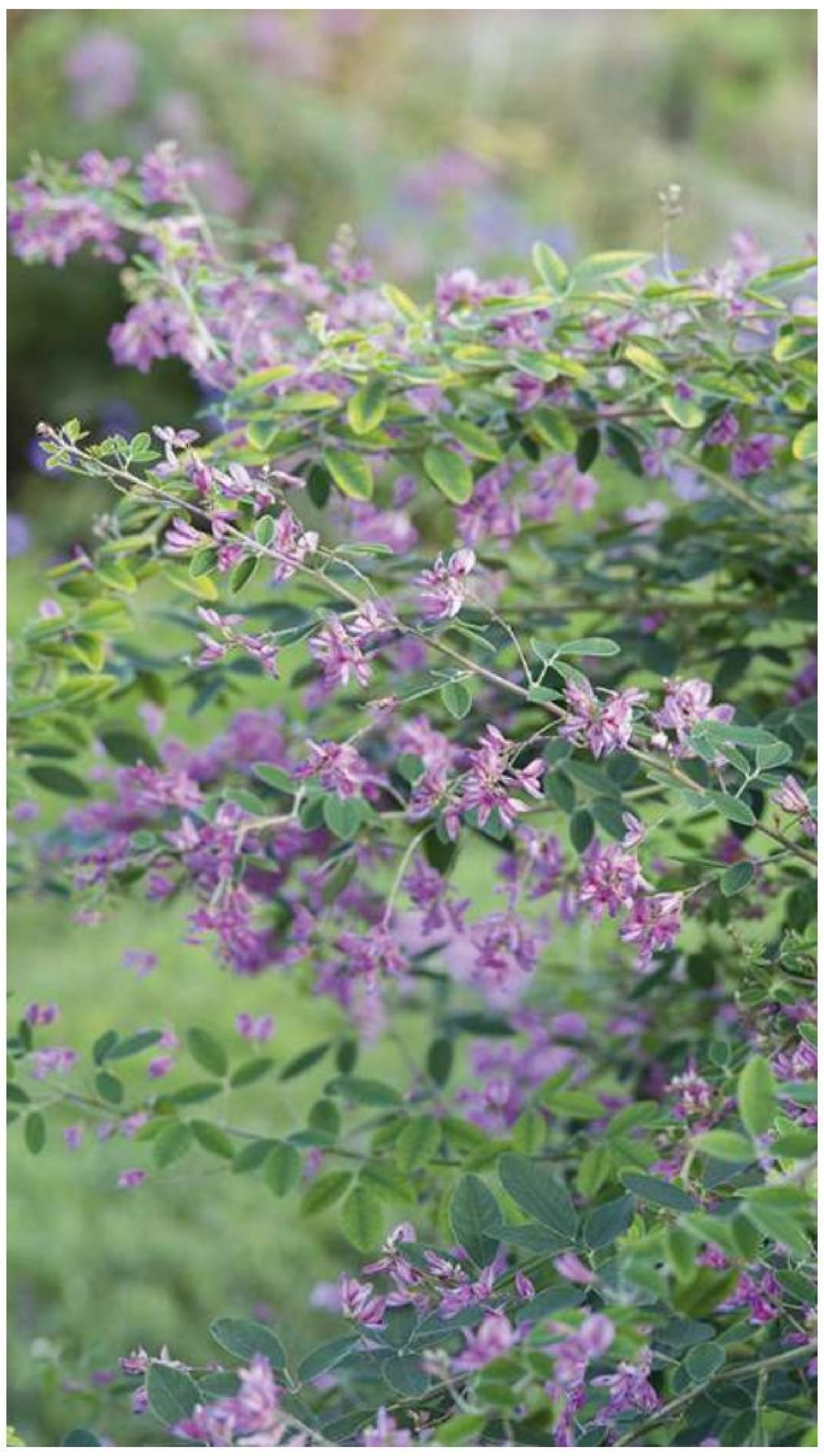
DACTYLICAPNOS MACROCAPNOS

Somehow this plant had more appeal when we could call it a climbing dicentra, but hey, what's in a name? It's still a good plant. Put it in a semi-shaded corner, preferably with some small shrubs, and you'll have a superb show from July to September. In spring it looks dead, but come May the shoots push up, bearing delightfully silver-laid leaves. Then in July the first yellow flowers emerge and, once they do, you'll recognise it immediately, despite its name, as a bleeding heart. To be safe, cover the roots with some leaf mould before winter.

Height 5m.
Origin China, India and Nepal.
Conditions Humus-rich soil that's not too dry in partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.
Season August to September. **HK**

I AM HEAD OVER HEELS IN LOVE WITH THE HAIRY, SHARP YELLOW-GREEN FOLIAGE

HEUCHERA 'PISTACHE'



MAAYKE DE RIDDER

LESPEDEZA THUNBERGII 'GIBRALTAR'

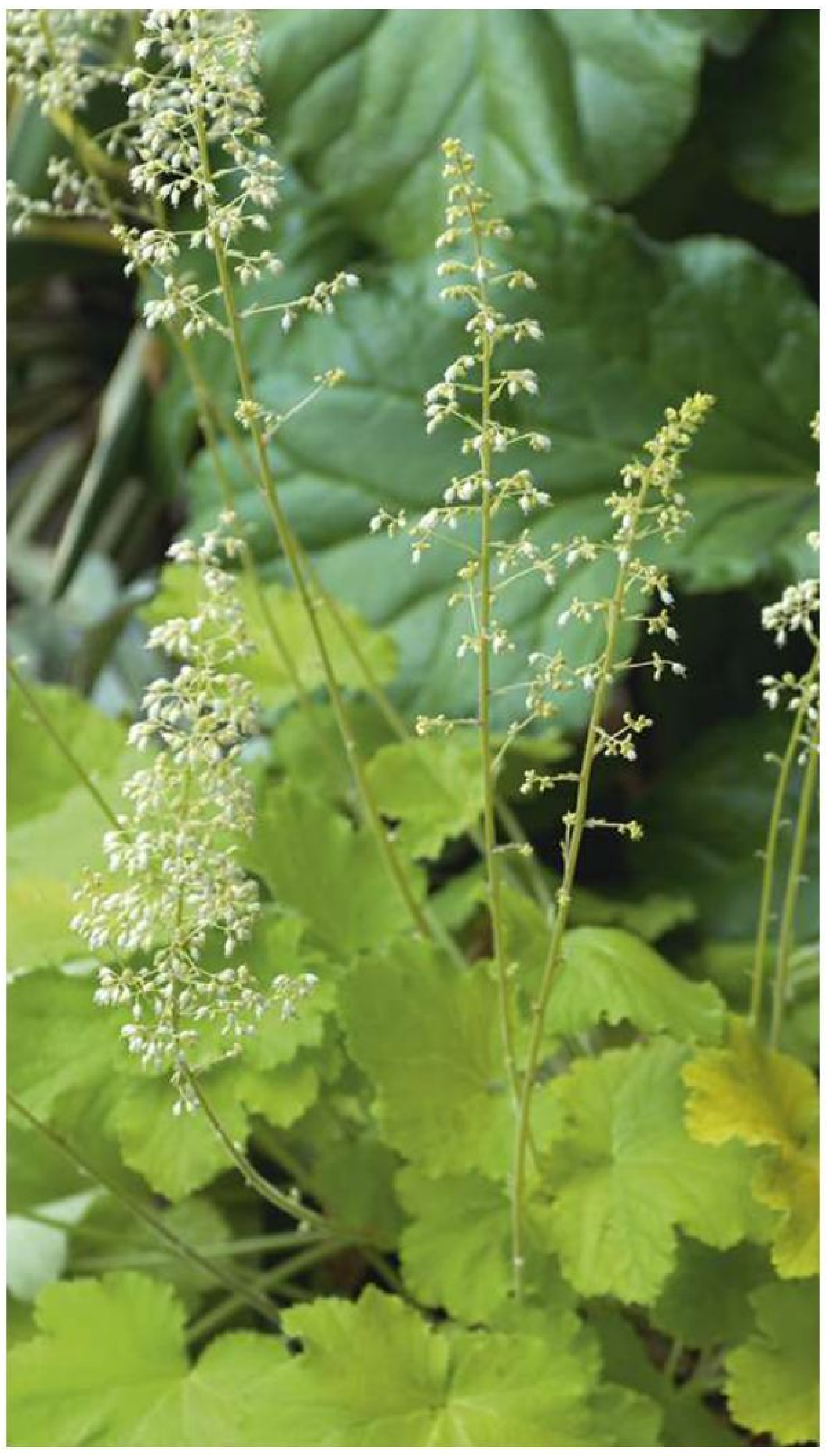
This semi-woody plant is a must for a late-summer/autumn garden. In cold winters it dies back but when it reappears it grows quickly. Stems are set with trifoliate, bluish-green leaves, growing to almost two metres. From August onwards pea-like flowers open in such large numbers that the stems bend over creating a fountain-like effect. 'Gibraltar', which is named after an estate in the USA, has lavender-pink flowers that are a softer colour and are borne in greater quantities than the straight species. After mild winters, prune it lightly, for a more branched, upright habit.

Height 2m.
Origin China, Japan and Korea.
Conditions Well-drained soil; sun.
Hardiness At least RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.
Season July to September. **HK**

HEUCHERA 'PISTACHE'

I have fallen head over heels in love with this plant. It's not the flowers (airy, white, late summer and autumn) but the foliage, which is large (and gets larger every year), hairy and a sharp yellow-green. The foliage looks good all year round and sits in a pot that I move around to cheer up whatever it's with. It was given to me by its breeder, who believes that cultivars named after food (and drink) sell better in France. I went off heucheras when I realised most of their leaf colours are leaden. This brought me back.

Height 50cm.
Origin Native to western USA but bred in France by Thierry Delabroye.
Conditions Part to full shade.
Hardiness USDA 4a-9b.
Season All year but particularly good from July to October. **BB**



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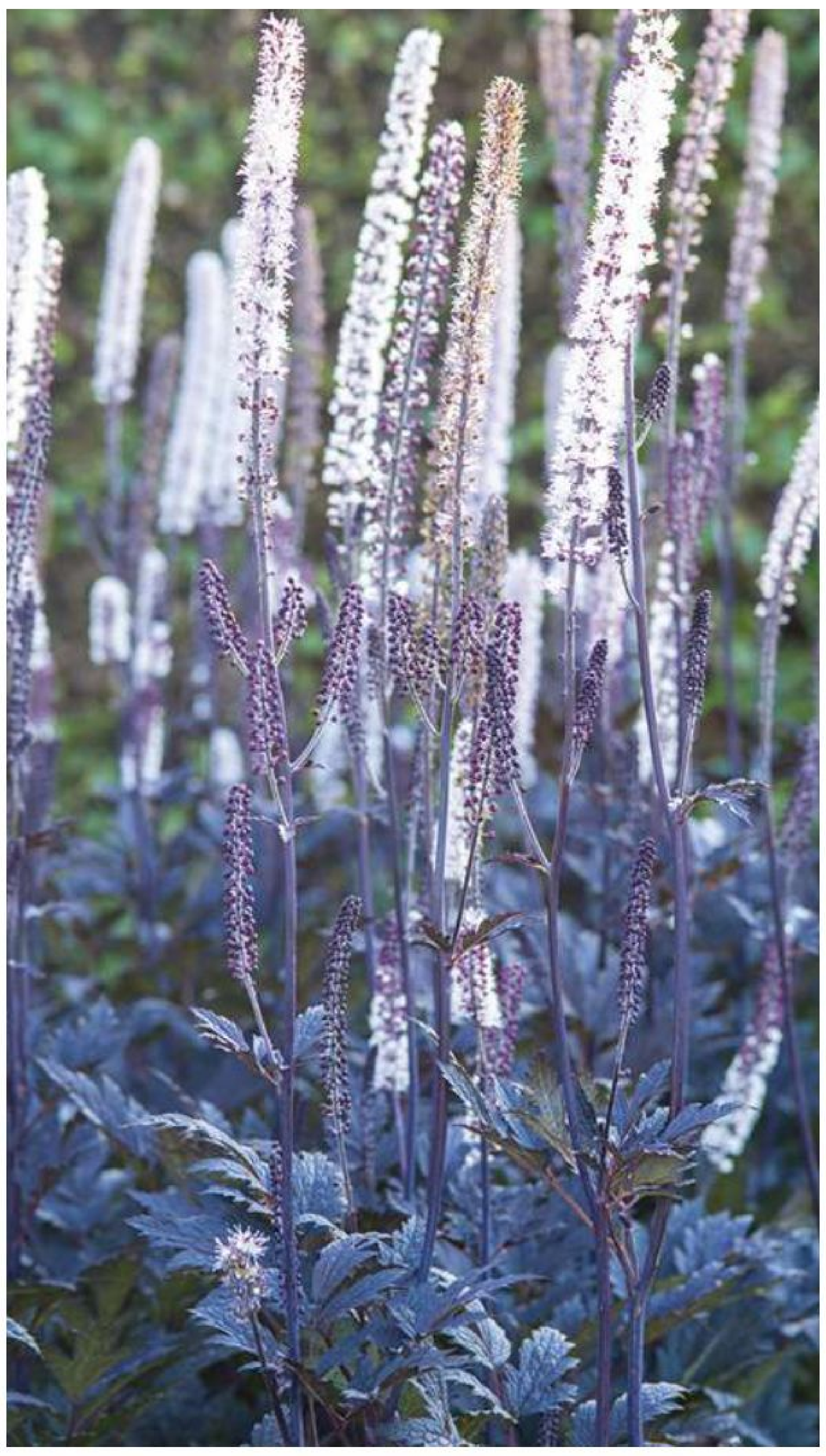


MAAYKE DE RIDDER

ACTAEA SIMPLEX 'SATIN DARKNESS'

This is a cultivar we bred ourselves. We have been trying to improve purple-leaved actaeas for more than 12 years (when we started they were still known as cimicifugas). We began trying to breed a pink-flowered one (and have yet to succeed), but in the process we've found that seedlings with a more metallic, purple colour have a thicker leaf texture than the brownish-red ones and are also more resistant to heat and drought. This cultivar has shiny purple leaves that thrive in full sun. Enjoy it and propagate it.

Height 1.6m.
Origin Bred in the Netherlands.
Conditions Good soil in sun or partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season August to October. **HK**

JASON INGRAM

DAHLIA MERCKII 'ALBA'

Dahlia merckii is a hardy dahlia with small lavender flowers on long stems. Graceful and demure, it is easier to use in the garden than most dahlias. I leave the tubers in and have never lost it in 15 years. About ten years ago I bought a white form, which I think was bred by Nori and Sandra Pope at Hadspen. The pure white petals are narrow and slightly flared back, giving the flowers a more star-like look. The plants are less vigorous but appear to be equally hardy, and the ethereal white stars on their long stems are enchanting.

Height 1.2m.
Origin Mexico.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun or light shade.
Hardiness USDA 7b-9b.
Season July to September. **DW**

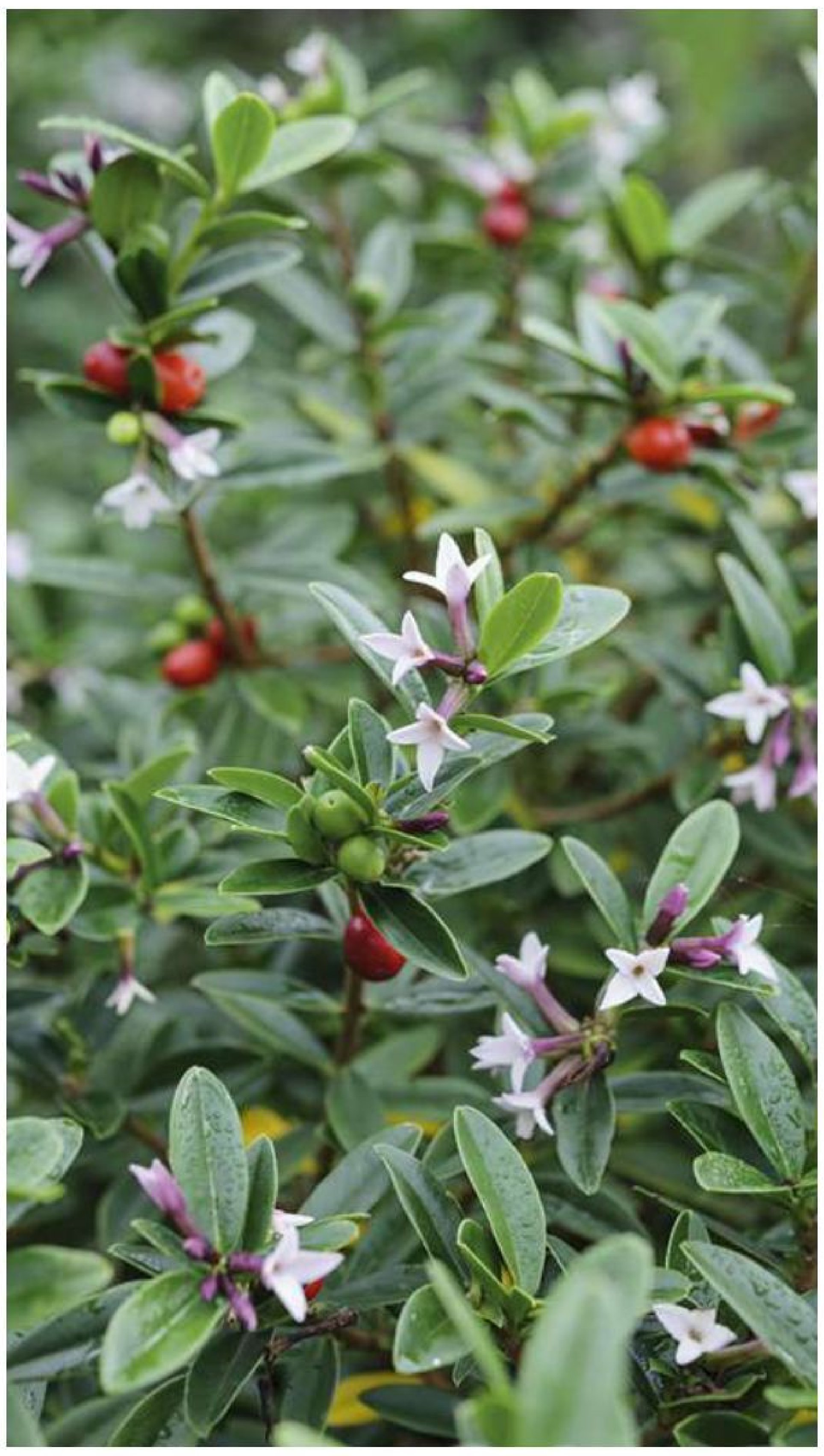
NOT EVERY SEDUM IS PINK; I LIKE THE MELLOW, BUFF TONES OF THESE BLOOMS

HYLOTELEPHIUM TELEPHIUM SUBSP. *RUPRECHTII*

DAPHNE TANGUTICA

This is a low-growing, evergreen daphne that blooms in spring then pauses. Just as the berries from the first flowers begin to turn red, it starts to bloom again – so from July through to September you get pink and white flowers together with bright-red berries. The flowers are fragrant during the day, with the scent intensifying as evening approaches. Plants are slow to get started but after three or four years they flex their muscles and begin to grow. They resent pruning, however, so site them carefully; I killed my first one by cutting it back. AGM.

Height 1.5m.
Origin China.
Conditions Sun or light shade; good soil.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.
Season May to October. **DW**



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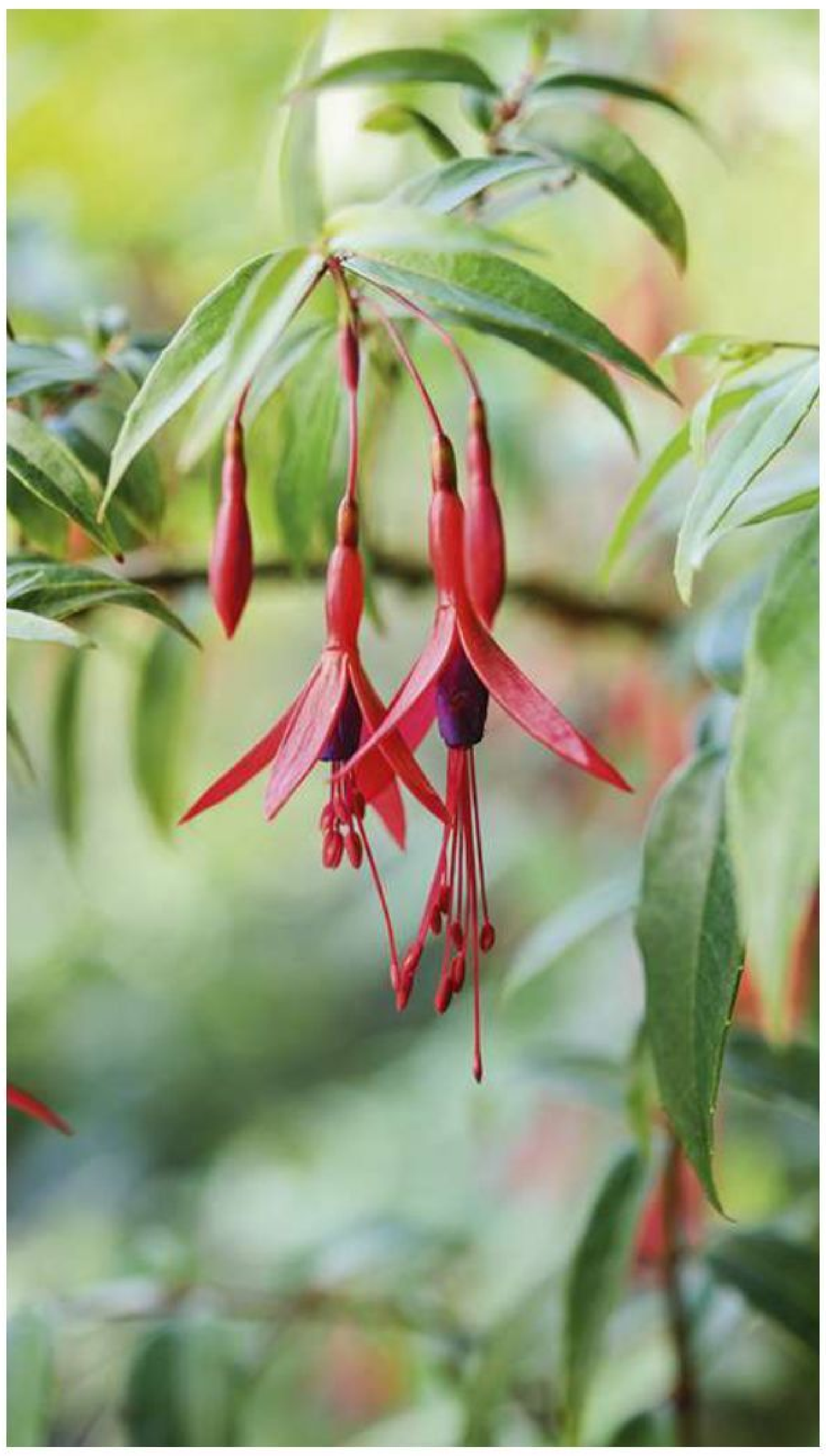


JASON INGRAM

FUCHSIA HATSCHBACHII

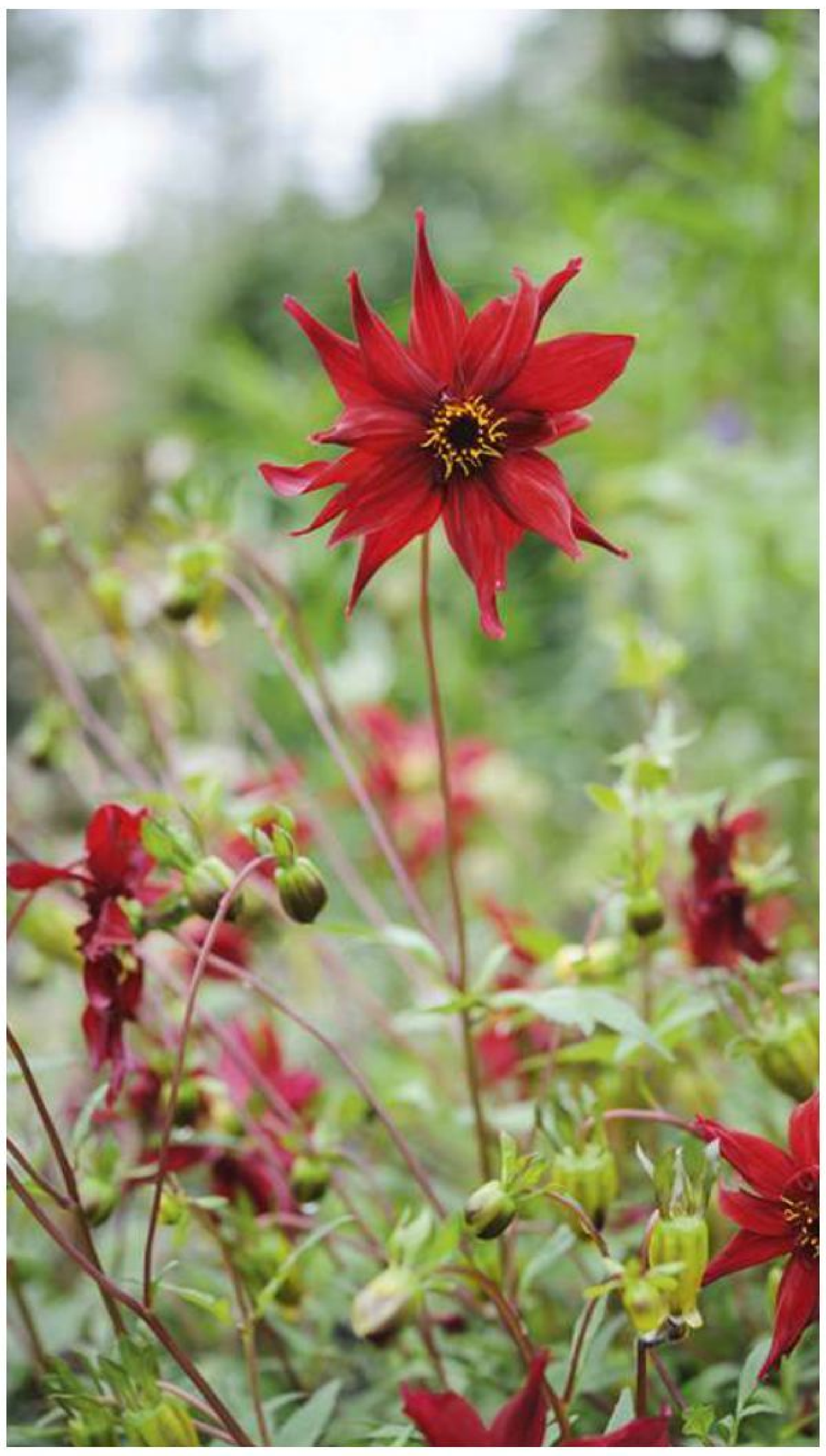
This graceful fuchsia makes a wonderful, lush shrub for the garden. It has relatively large, willow-like, glossy green leaves and bushy, copper stems. In Brazil its flowers are pollinated by hummingbirds and are slimmer than those of *F. magellanica*, but otherwise look similar. The flowers are produced on the tips of the current season's growth. Plant in a sheltered position and cut back hard in the spring to promote strong, arching shoots that will show off the flowers and foliage to their best. Feed periodically through the summer and treat for capsid bugs to ensure a good display. AGM.

Height 2m.
Origin Brazil.
Conditions Good soil in sun or partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H2, USDA 8a-11.
Season September to October. **MR**

DAHLIA 'RAGGED ROBIN'

This is a very small, un-dahlia-like dahlia, which acts more like a herbaceous perennial. It is a surprisingly hardy plant. I leave the tubers in the ground but try to remember to give them a few slug pellets in May so they can get up and away from the slugs. They have attractive, finely cut leaves, often red-veined, with dark-red stems, but it is the dainty, semi-double flowers with their twisted, deep-ruby red petals that captivate me. 'Ragged Robin' was a seedling of *Dahlia* 'Bishop of Llandaff' selected by Avon Bulbs.

Height 70cm.
Origin Seedling at Avon Bulbs.
Conditions Sun, good soil, mulch in winter.
Hardiness USDA 8a-10b.
Season July to October. **DW**



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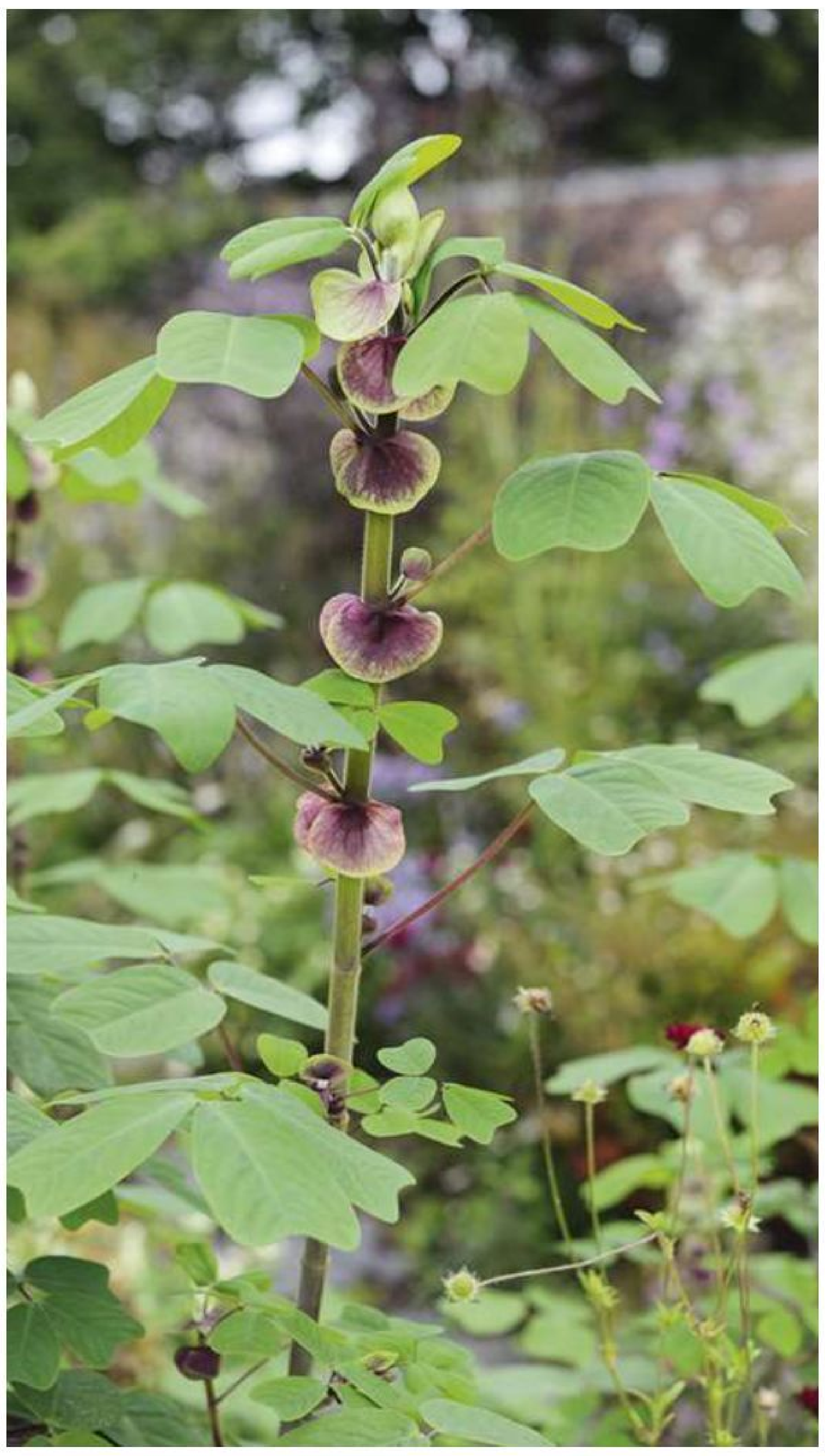


JASON INGRAM

AMICIA ZYGOMERIS

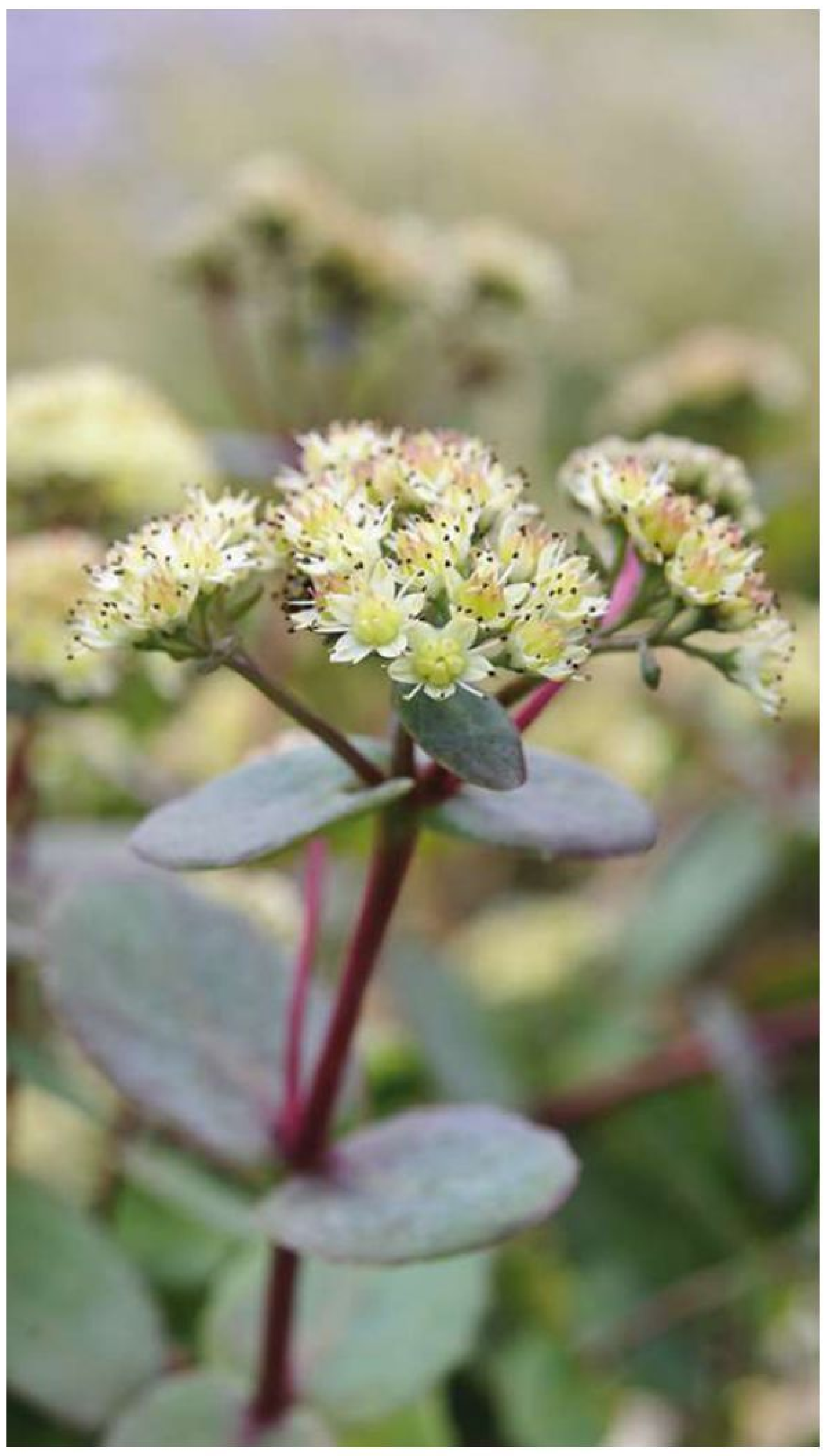
An unusual perennial, *Amicia zygomeris* dies back to the ground in winter, then grows up to around two metres every summer. The tip of every sturdy stem, and the base of every leaf, is covered in a pair of fat purple bracts that look like flowers. Each leaf is divided into two pairs of round leaflets, which fold down neatly at night – altogether a weird design. Then in October the real flowers emerge and – horror of horrors – they are bright-yellow pea flowers, which I could happily live without. A plant that is as strange as its name.

Height 2m.
Origin Mexico.
Conditions Sun; good soil. Mulch in winter.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 7b-9b.
Season July to August. **DW**

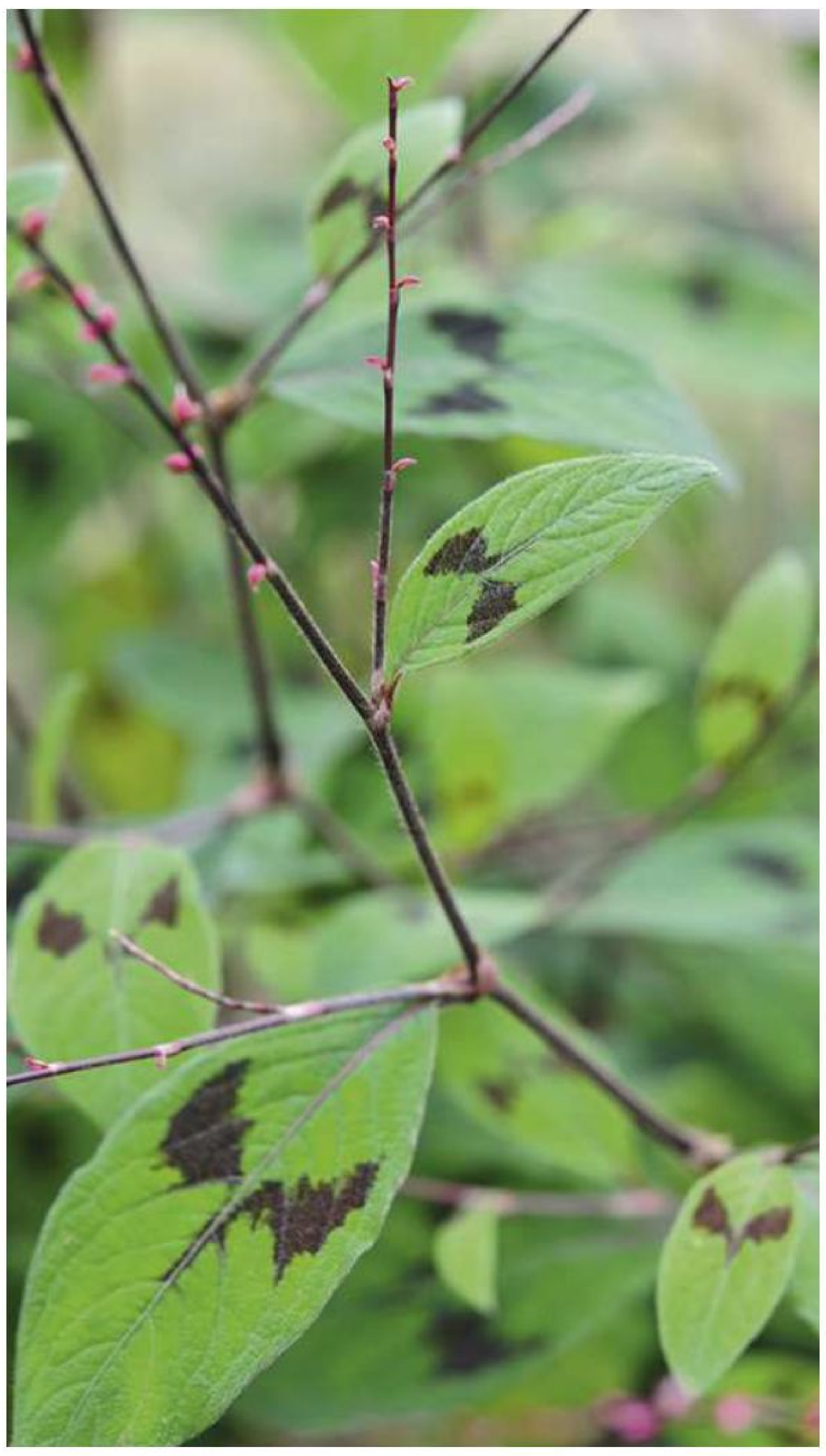
HYLOTELEPHIUM TELEPHIUM SUBSP. *RUPRECHTII*

Not every sedum is pink; I like the mellow, buff tones of these flowers as a complement to the dark purples and blues of late summer. New blooms on this more sprawling plant are a creamy yellow, against a glaucous foliage. Long summer days bring a darker flower tone. By the first frosts, flowers have acquired a light biscuit bronze, and foliage is marked with attractive pink flushes. Mixed with *Euphorbia polychroma* and *Stipa calamagrostis* in a gravel scree, the cameo endures from May to October.

Height 40cm.
Origin Europe and Asia.
Conditions Free-draining garden loam, tolerant of lean nutrient conditions.
Hardiness USDA 3a-9b.
Season July to September. **CM**



JASON INGRAM



JASON INGRAM

PERSICARIA VIRGINIANA VAR. *FILIFORMIS*

As other plants begin to wane, this *Persicaria* justifies its place in the garden. Principally grown for the velvet-textured foliage, its emerald leaves are symmetrically marked with an attractive chocolate-brown blotch. Wine-red stems repeatedly branch into an airy structure, the terminal wisp of stem so slender it is scarcely visible – until, that is, tiny flower buds open to reveal a perfect pinpoint of vivid scarlet.

Height 65-80cm.
Origin Variety from China.
Conditions Prefers a moisture-retentive soil in light shade, protected from harsh winds.
Hardiness USDA 4a-8b.
Season Foliage from June; flowers from September. **CM**

SYMPHYOTRICHUM CORDIFOLIUM ‘CHIEFTAIN’

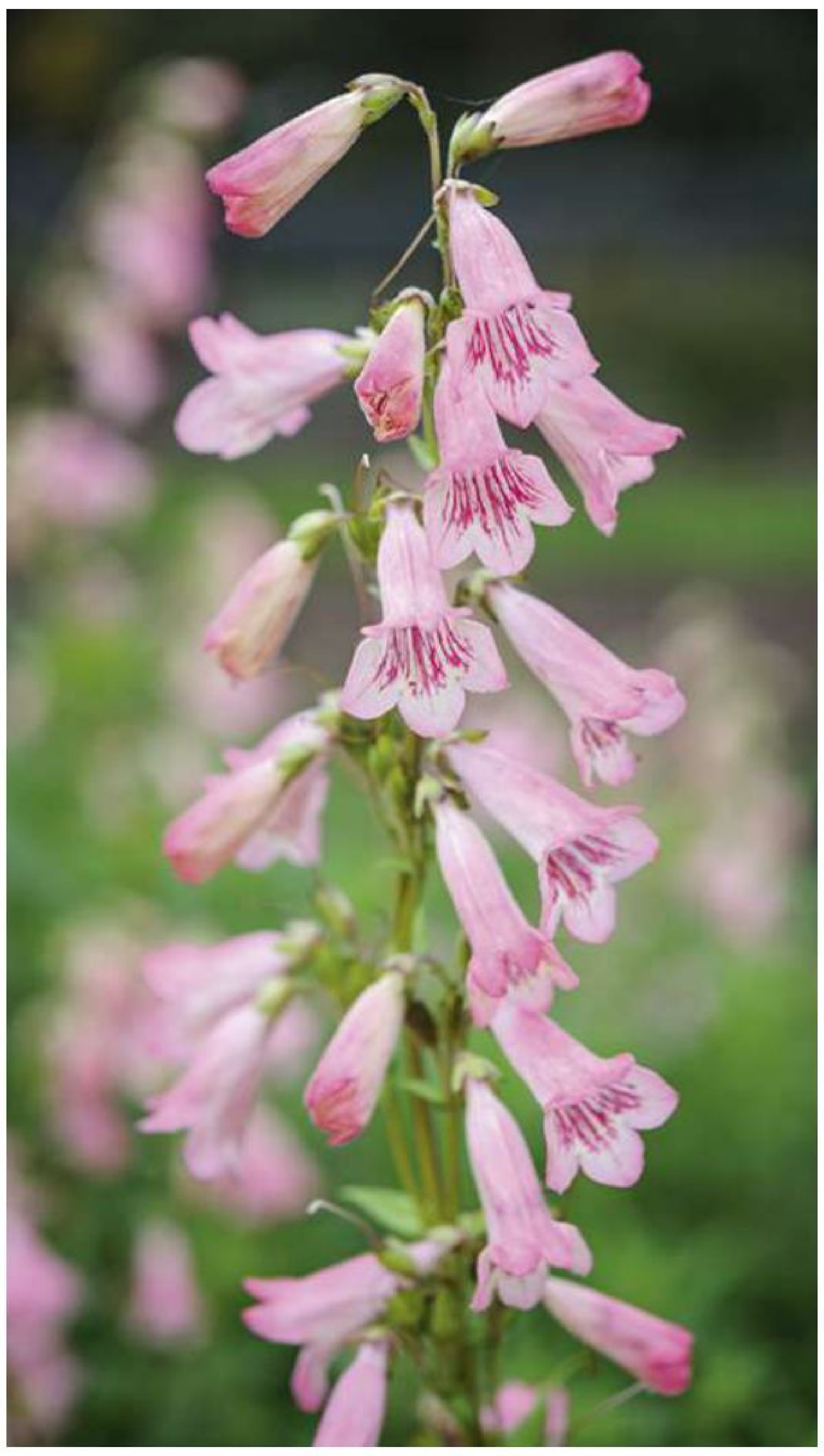
Late summer and early autumn is when the *Asteraceae* or daisy family rises into ascendancy. This aster, now reclassified as *Symphyotrichum*, flowers late in the season on slender, dark-red stems with spires of small, lavender-blue daisies in such abundance they appear as a hazy cloud. New flowers open with a yellow disc that changes to reddish-purple on pollination, a pleasing contrast to the lavender ray petals. The heart-shaped foliage is mildew resistant. AGM.

Height 1.8-2m.
Origin North America.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil in sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.
Season August to October. **MC**

JASON INGRAM

SMALL, ABUNDANT, LAVENDER-BLUE DAISIES APPEAR AS A HAZY CLOUD

SYMPHYOTRICHUM CORDIFOLIUM ‘CHIEFTAIN’


JASON INGRAM

PENSTEMON ‘HIDCOTE PINK’

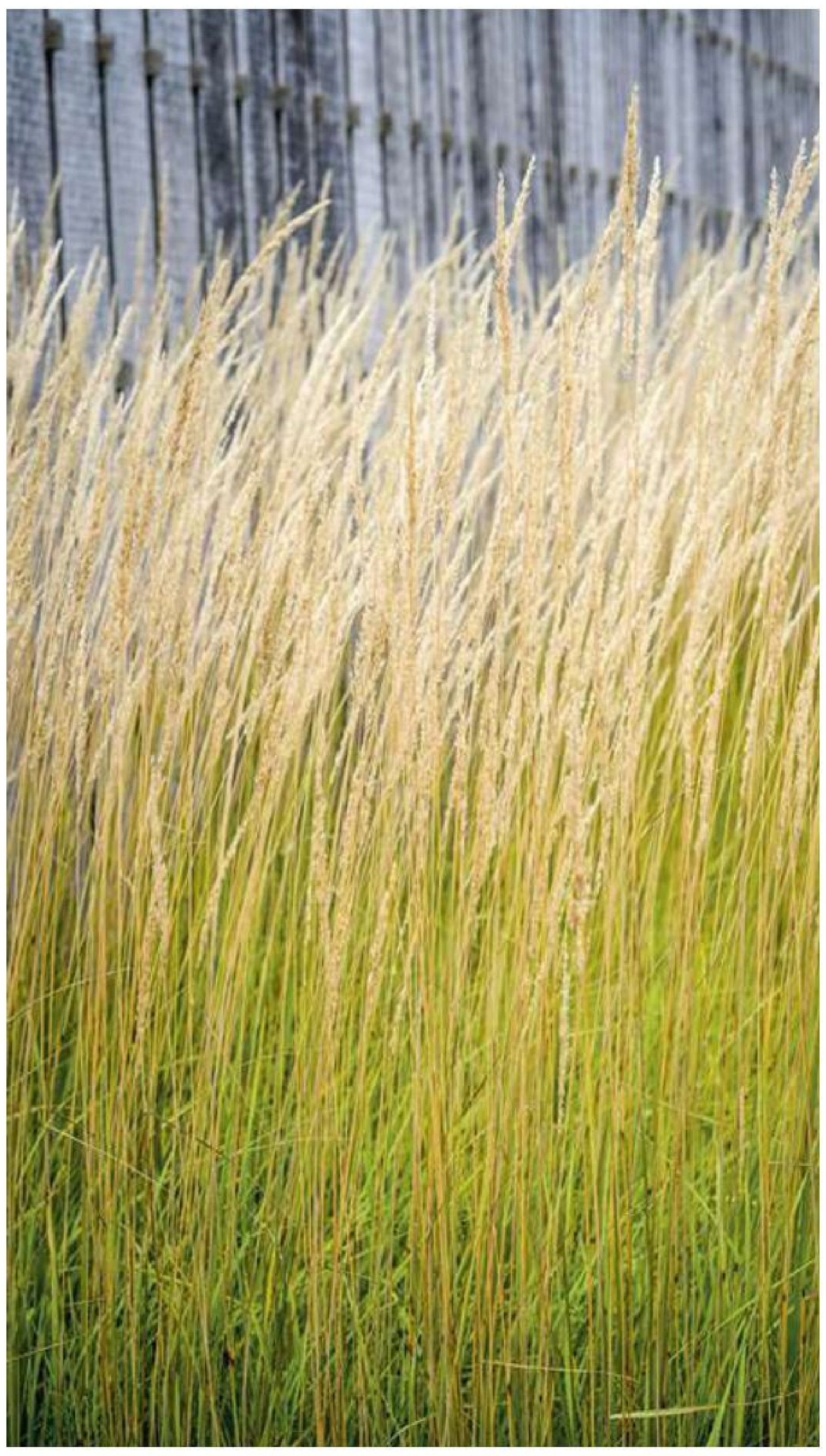
This was one of the first penstemons I grew commercially as it is long-lived, possesses good foliage with long spikes of slender, pink trumpets and darker pink guidelines for insects to follow to find nectar. I am surprised by its RHS hardiness rating as I have found it as hardy as several other cultivars that have a value of H4 as long as it has reasonable drainage in winter. Many hardy penstemons have slender foliage but ‘Hidcote Pink’ has broader, pale-green leaves that are held horizontally from the stem. AGM.

Height 90cm.
Origin Cultivar grown at Hidcote Manor, Gloucestershire.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 8a-10b.
Season July to September. **MC**

CALAMAGROSTIS X *ACUTIFLORA* ‘KARL FOERSTER’

This ornamental grass, named after the famous German nurseryman, has one of the longest seasons of interest of any plant used in gardens. Cut it down to ground level in late February and it will produce vigorous arching clumps of foliage within a month. By midsummer it will form a strong, vertical accent with dark-purple flower plumes. These fade to silvery buff in autumn and are retained throughout the winter months. It can be used as an effective screen.

Height 1.5-1.8m.
Origin Naturally occurring hybrid between *C. epigejos* and *C. arundinacea*.
Conditions Most soils but not too dry.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.
Season Foliage June to October. **MC**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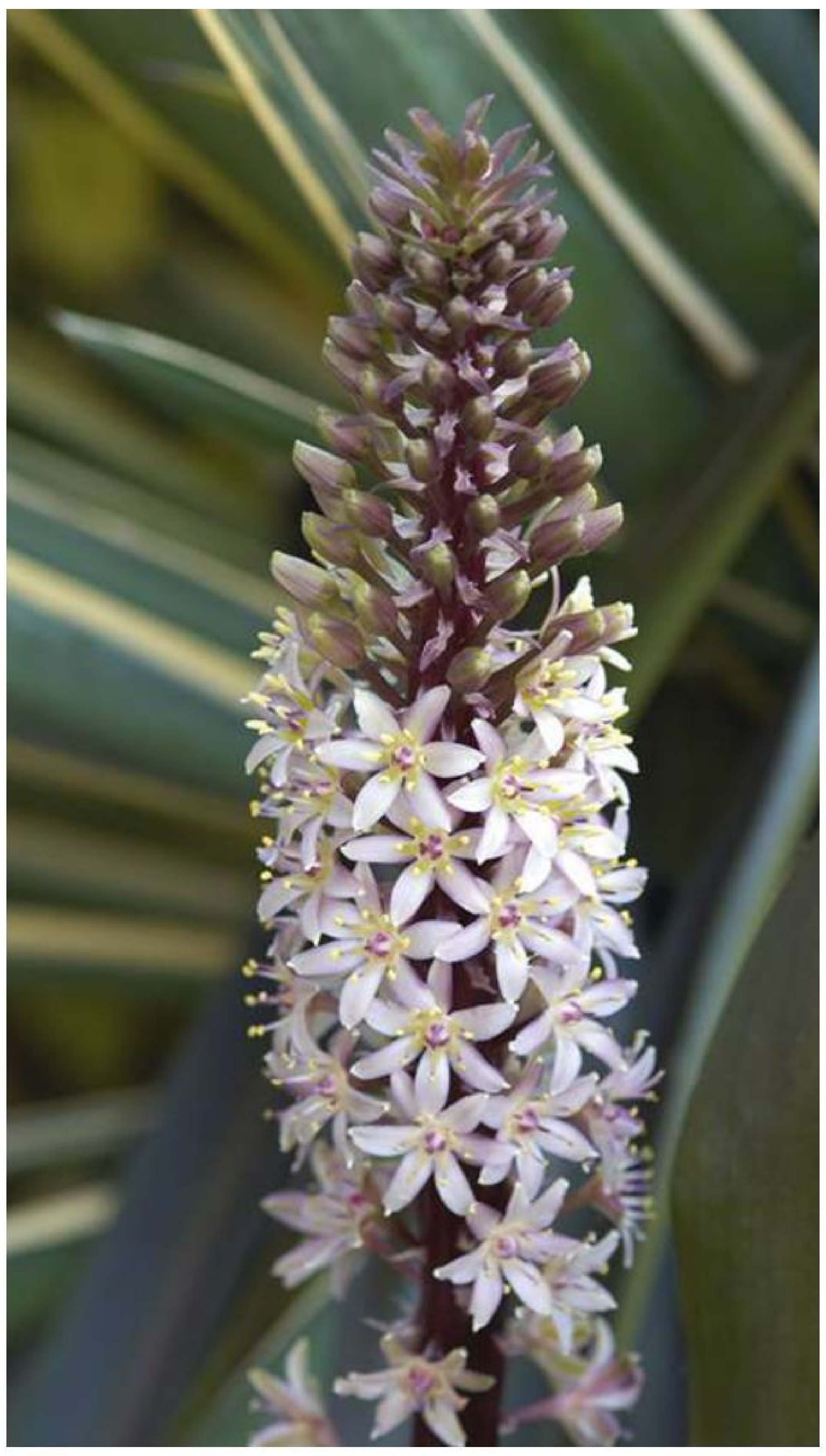

TORIE CHUGG

EUCOMIS COMOSA ‘SPARKLING BURGUNDY’

This is utterly hardy and one bulb slowly develops to make a clump. In late spring brilliant, deep-red shoots pierce the soil and develop into dark-maroon leaf rosettes. In early autumn long heads of sparkling flowers appear and have the typical tuft of foliage like a pineapple (a ‘coma’) on top. The petals (or rather, tepals, as they are not obviously petals or sepals) persist and look good into late autumn. AGM.

Height 75cm.
Origin Seedling selected for its colouring by Tony Avent in North Carolina. The species is from southern Africa.
Conditions Sun to part shade on soil that’s not waterlogged.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 6b-9b.
Season Foliage May to September, flowers August to November. **BB**

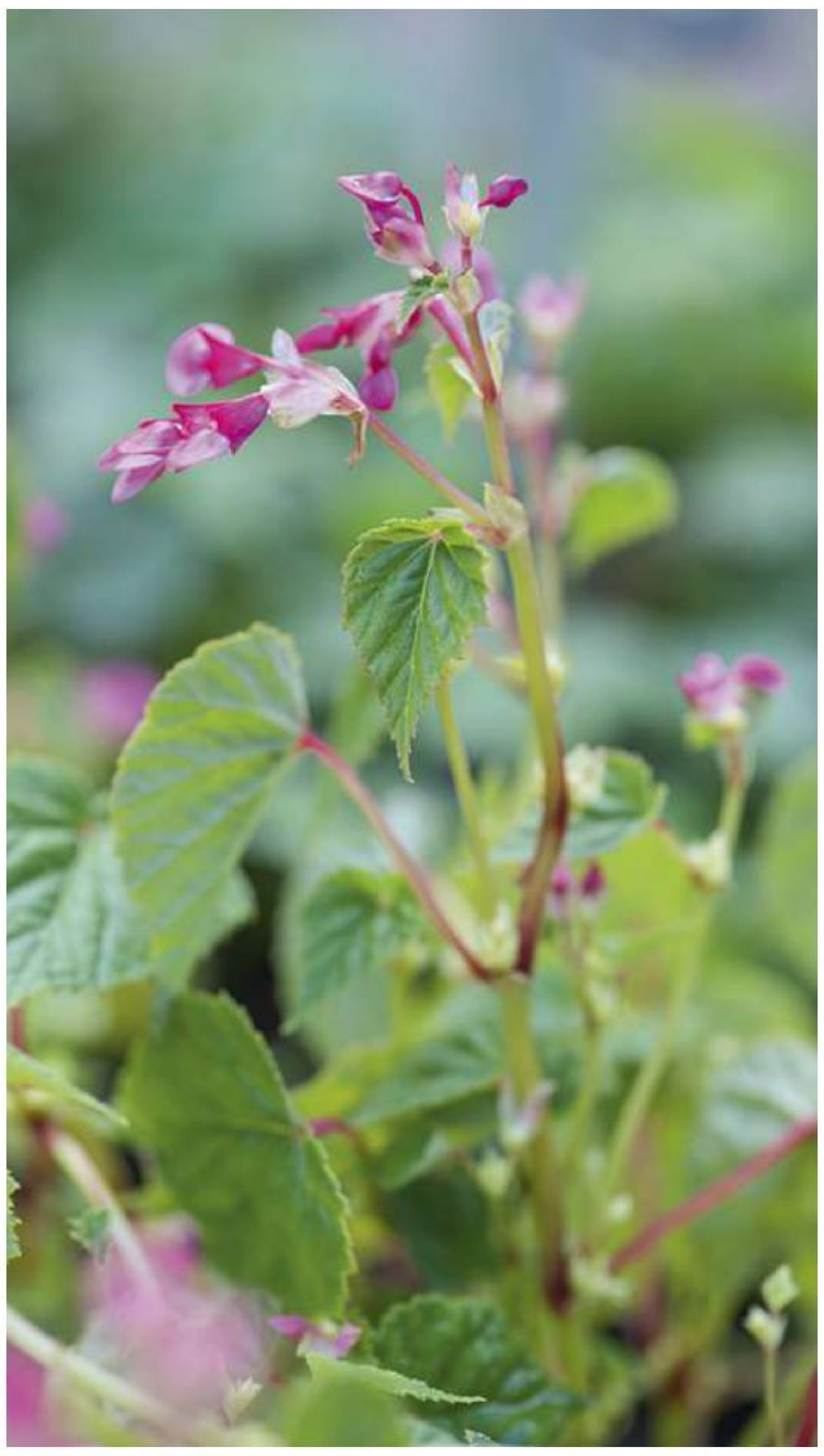
DISHEVELLED, CATKIN-LIKE, LIVELY PINK BLOOMS ARE HELD ATOP FLEXIBLE STEMS

PERSICARIA ORIENTALIS

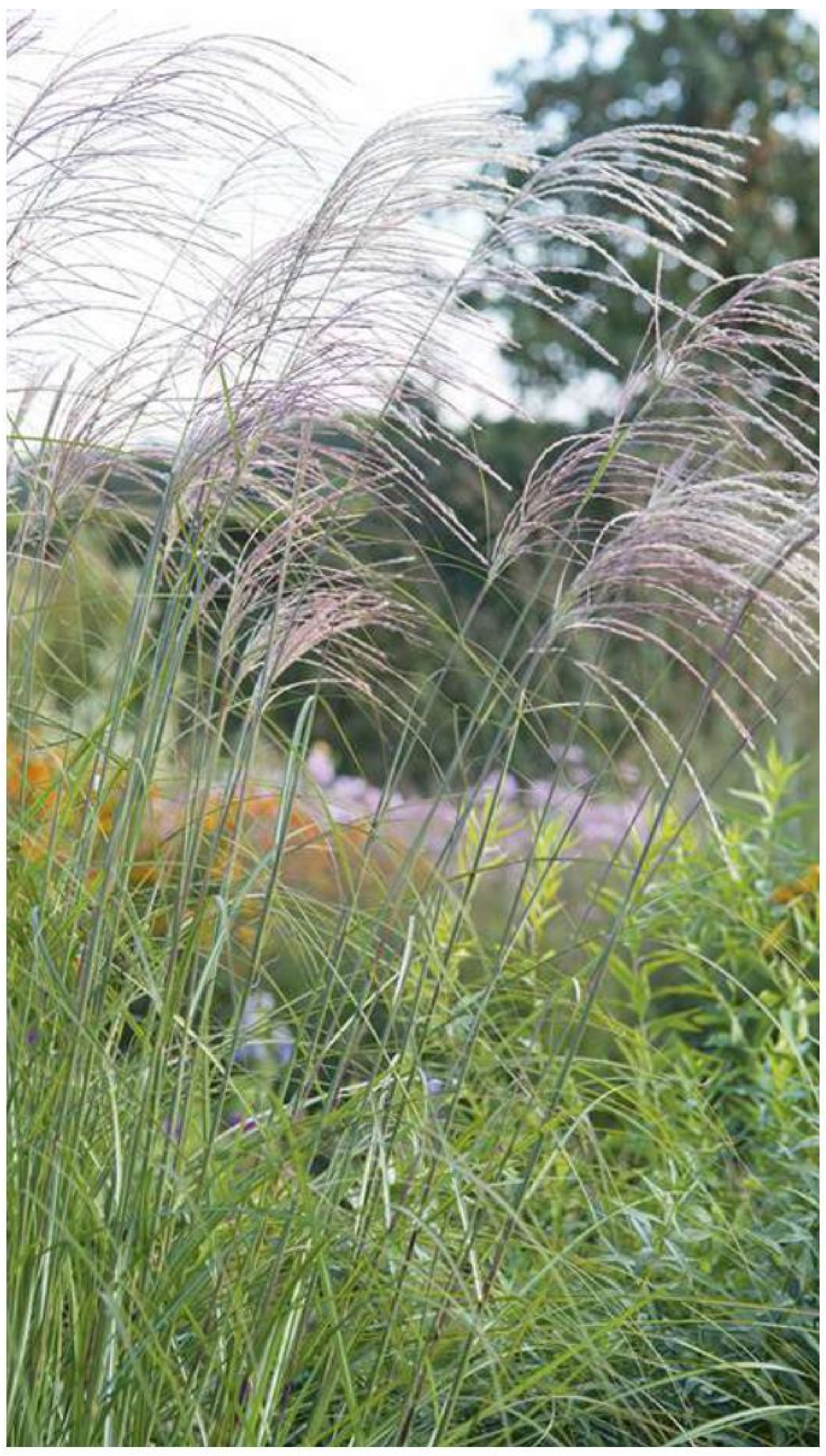
BEGONIA GRANDIS 'MODEST MINIATURE'

Ton Hannink, a well-known clematis collector, gave me this unassuming little plant, which he found in China. It's a form of *Begonia grandis*, but with smaller flowers that are more congested and sit upright, making them more visible above the leaves. In addition the leaves are smaller and a darker green, with an almost deltoid shape. Bulbils are freely formed and in a single season you can grow hundreds of plants. Better still, it is even hardier than *B. grandis*, providing a nice hardy begonia for the garden.

Height 35cm.
Origin Eastern Asia.
Conditions Humus-rich soil in a sheltered position in partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Season August to September. **HK**



MAAYKE DE RIDDER



MAAYKE DE RIDDER

MISCANTHUS SINENSIS 'BETH CHATTO'

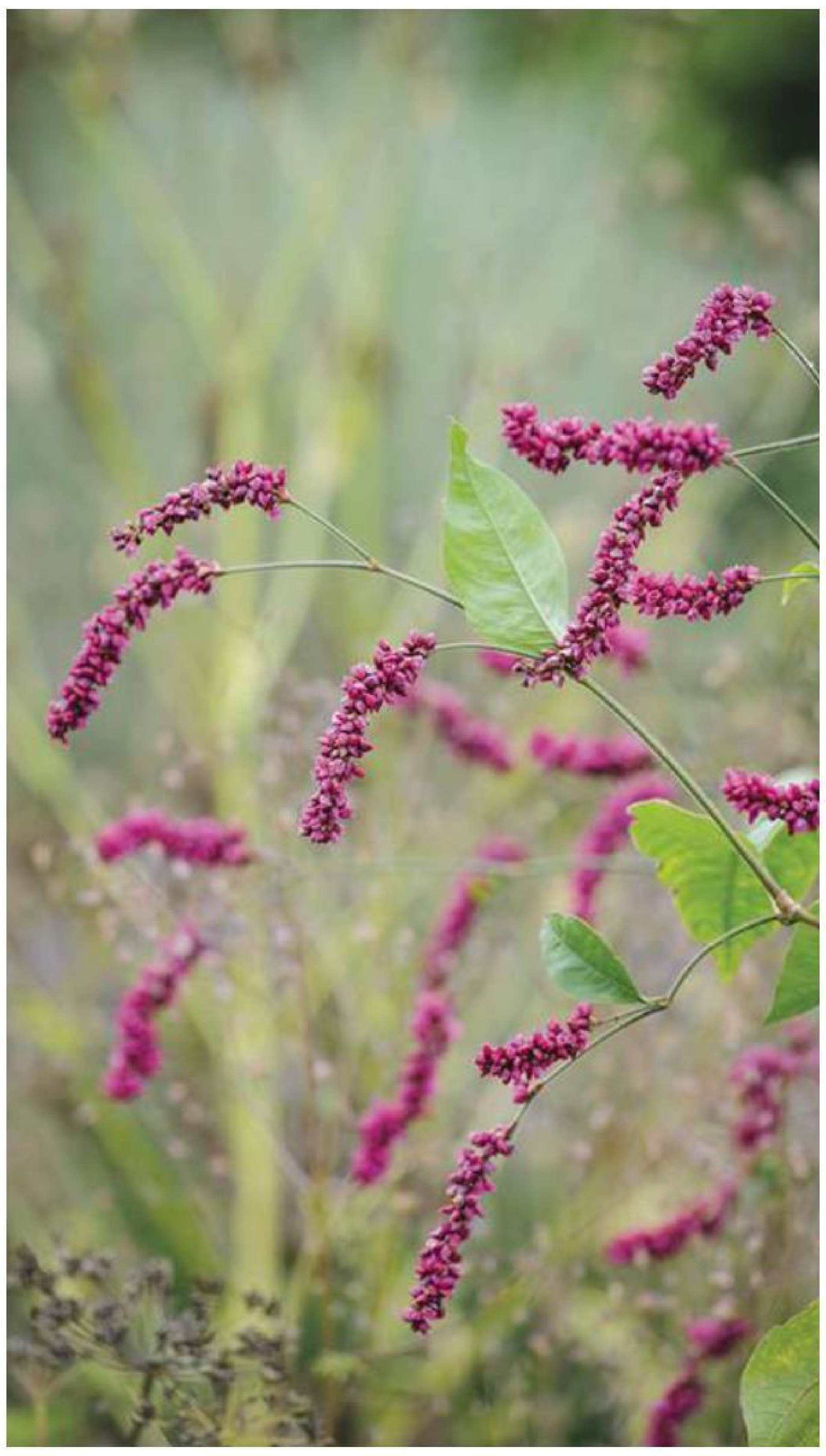
In the early 1990s I paid a visit to Ernst Pagels' nursery in northern Germany along with Beth Chatto, Piet Oudolf and Rob Leopold. I remember that Ernst was very impressed by Beth, and some years later he named one of his most beautiful *Miscanthus* seedlings after her – in fact, it was the last *Miscanthus* selection he named before his death in 2007. The whole plant has an elegant, filigree appearance. Its narrow leaves are relatively low to the ground, providing extra space for the dark stems, which carry silvery, slightly bent, brown plumes.

Height 1.8m.
Origin Eastern Asia.
Conditions Normal soil; sun.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season August to September. **HK**

PERSICARIA ORIENTALIS

Kiss-me-over-the-garden-gate, as this plant is known, is a lovely, lanky annual that is easily grown from seed. The catkin-like flowers are a dishevelled arrangement of lively pink blooms held atop flexible stems. It is useful for fitting in between perennials to add an extra layer of flowers and can also be woven through a long or deep border to create a sense of unity. To get good germination, use fresh seed and give it a cold period. We sow seed outdoors directly into plugs and let the elements do their work; germination takes place in spring. Pot on as required and protect from slugs.

Height 1.6m.
Origin East Asia and Australia.
Conditions Any good soil in sun.
Hardiness RHS H3.
Season September to October. **MR**



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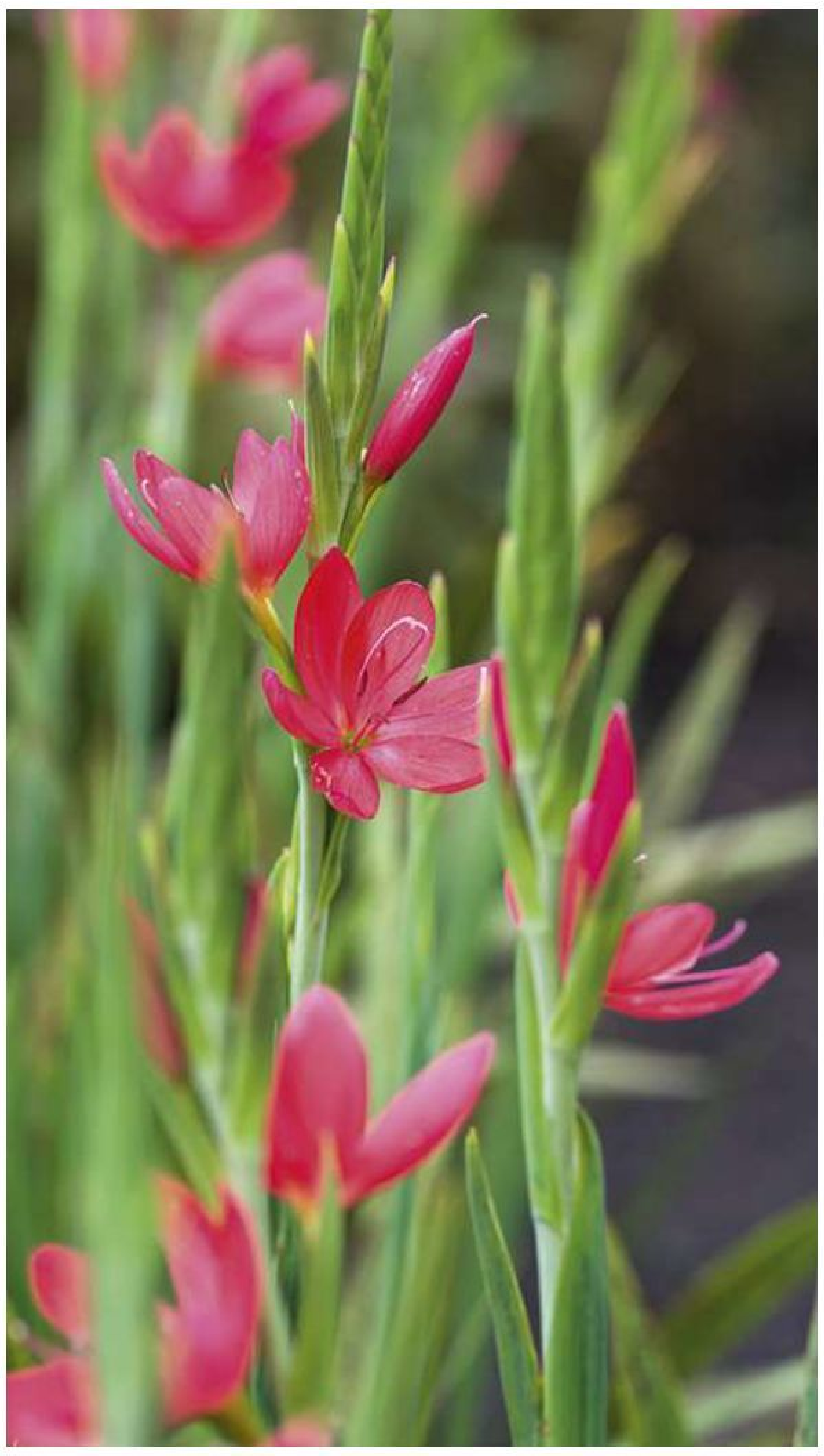

MAAYKE DE RIDDER

HESPERANTHA COCCINEA 'ELBURTON GLOW'

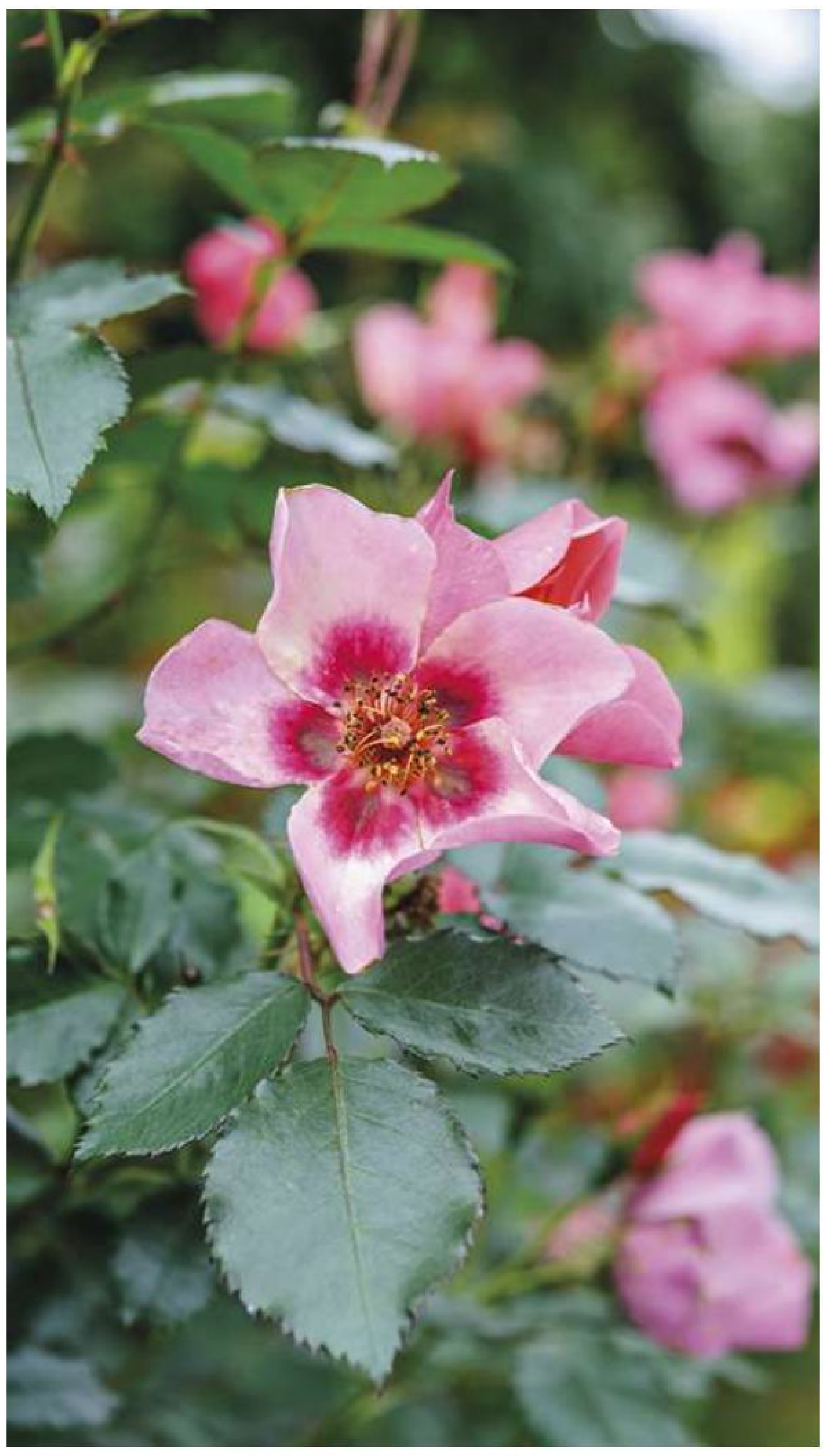
This valuable autumn-flowering plant is said to thrive only in fertile, moist soils, and I've seen many impressive clumps full of flowers at pond sides. But it will also tolerate drier soils and in these conditions can be completely hardy. Here on my nursery, with humus-rich, sandy soil, I've never lost one, even in the coldest of winters. In fact they grow like weeds, forming a wide mat in no time at all. From September onwards the first flowers open to an unmistakable salmon-red colour.

Height 60cm.
Origin South Africa.
Conditions Moist and reasonably dry soils.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Season September to October. **HK**

ROSA FOR YOUR EYES ONLY (= 'CHEWEYESUP')

It has long been the ambition of rose breeders to incorporate the dark eye of the wild Persian rose, which originates from Iran and Afghanistan, into a healthy garden rose. Decades of work have come to fruition with this new group of roses that exhibit the unusual dark eye. This one has loose clusters of mauve-pink flowers with a darker central eye; in cool weather the flowers produced are of deeper shades. It makes a dense shrub that flowers through summer, well into autumn and has clean, disease-free foliage.

Height 1m.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Any rich soil that is not too wet in winter in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Season July to October. **MR**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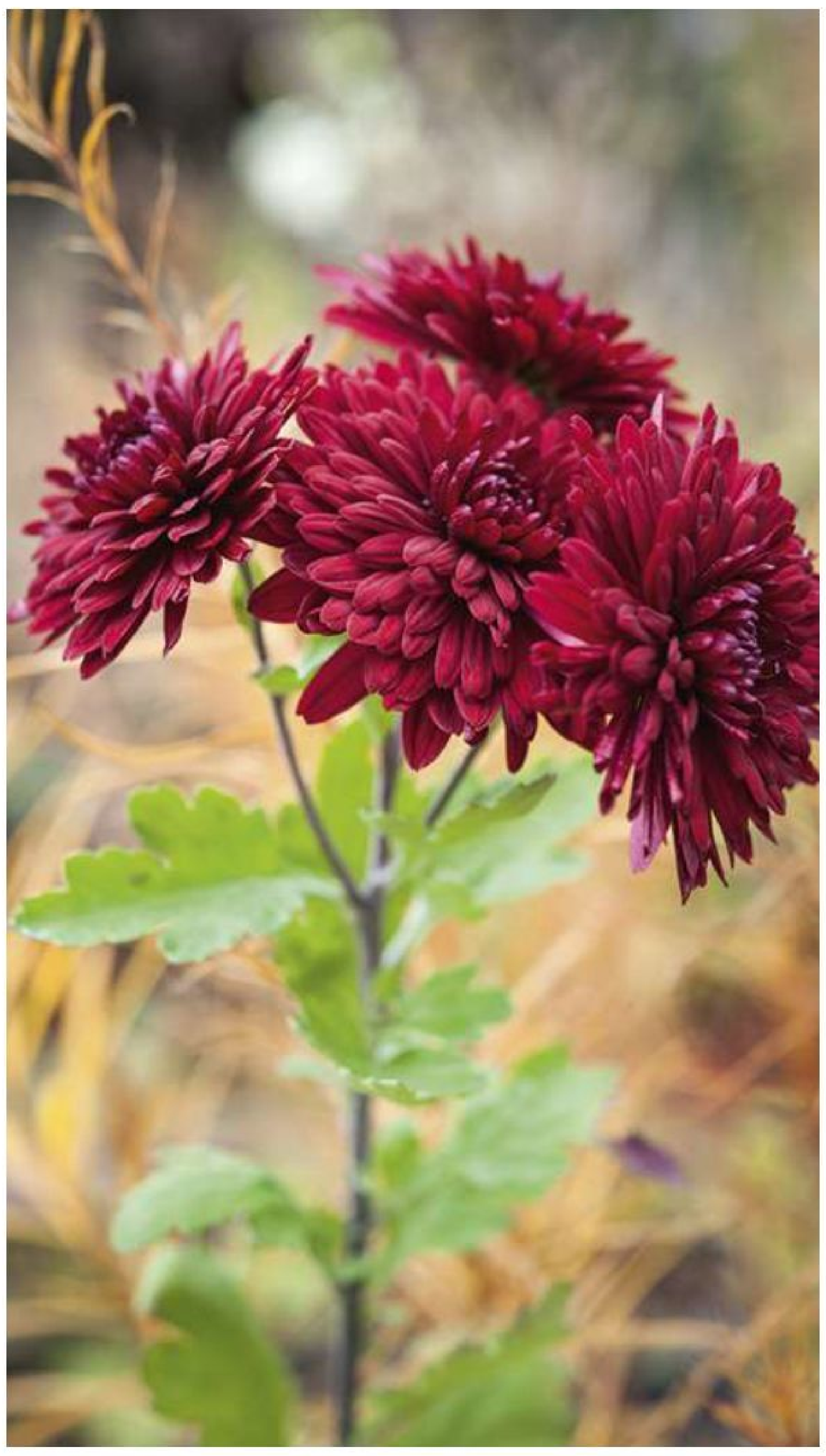

JASON INGRAM

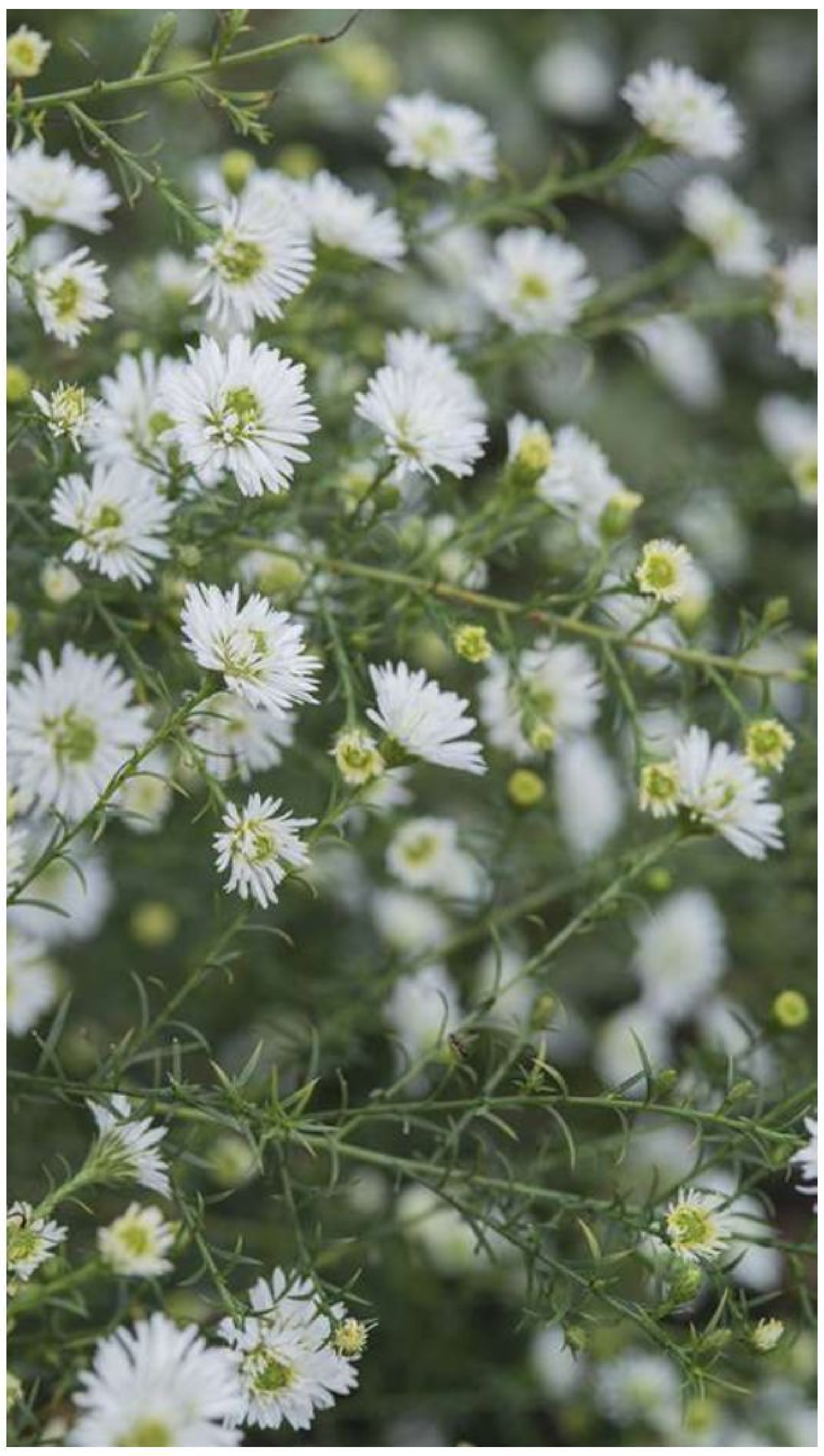
CHRYSANTHEMUM 'RUBY MOUND'

This autumn-flowering, double chrysanthemum is the sumptuous colour of a rich burgundy. It's not very hardy, but it's worth the trouble of digging it up and keeping it in a container in a relatively frost-free environment over winter. Alternatively, take some cuttings in late summer or early autumn as an insurance policy against winter loss. Useless for insects, with neither nectar nor pollen, but a superb colour. AGM.

Height 60cm.
Origin Raised by Edgar and Ruth Lehman of Faribault, Minnesota in the 1950s.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil in sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H3.
Season September to November. **MC**

BRIGHT-RED BUDS SPLIT OPEN TO REVEAL A FAT, RICH, VELVETY-PURPLE SKIRT

FUCHSIA 'ENFANT PRODIGUE'



MAAYKE DE RIDDER

SYMPHYOTRICHUM PILOSUM VAR. *PRINGLEI* 'MONTE CASSINO DOUBLE'

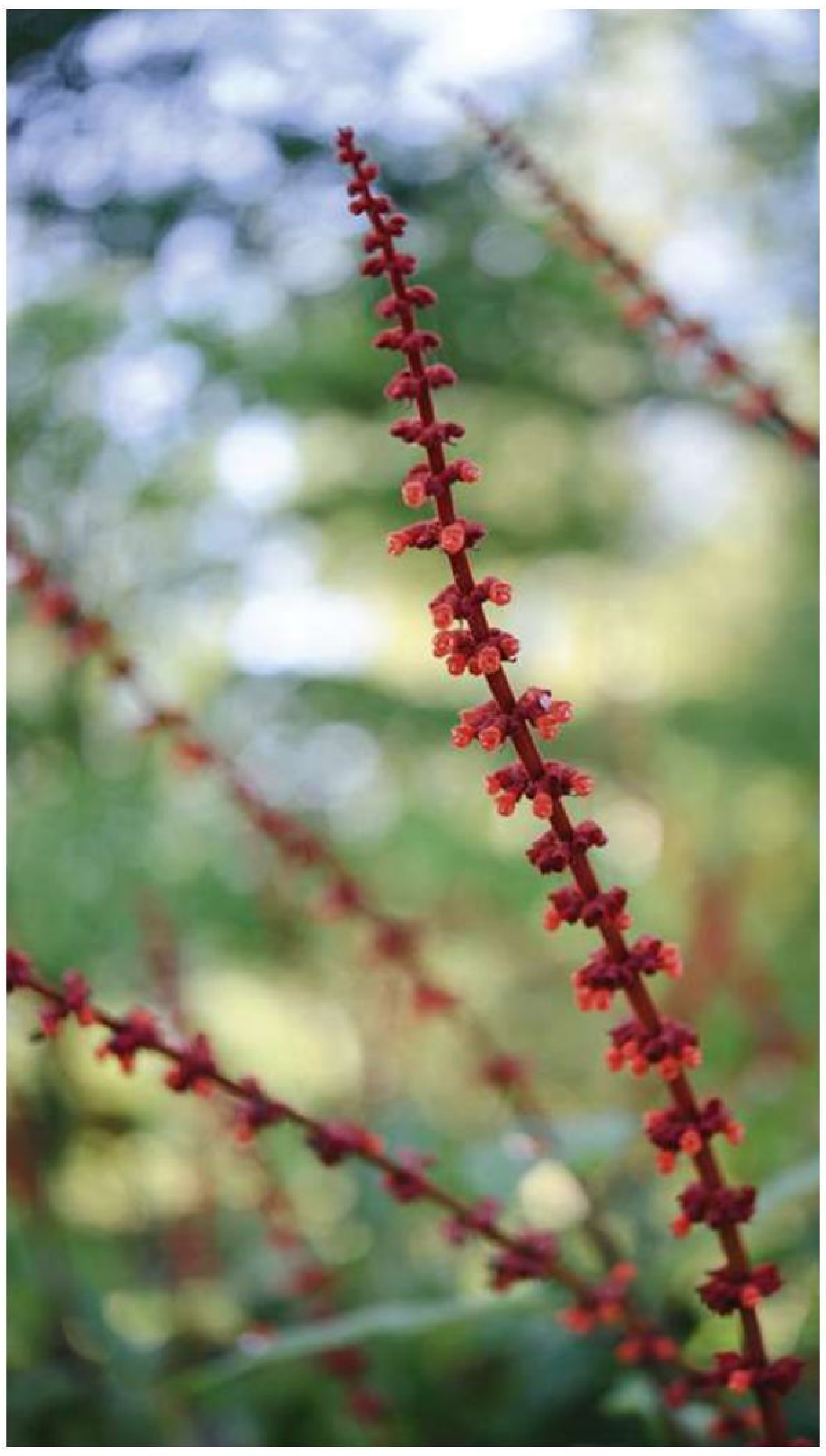
Aster specialist Matthieu Vermes from Le Domaine de la Source recommended this plant to me. The single 'Monte Cassino' is a popular cut flower, but you don't tend to see this double form as often. This is a pity, because it is the perfect garden plant. The dark-green, linear foliage on twiggy stems is never affected by wilt and, from September onwards, hundreds of small, fully double, pure-white pompons open with pale-green centres. A very clean, fresh plant that lasts until late autumn.

Height 1m.
Origin North America.
Conditions Normal soil; sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.
Season September to October. **HK**

SALVIA CONFERTIFLORA

Giant pots of this are wheeled on to the terrace at home each summer, threaded between specimen *Agapanthus praecox* to give an exuberant display lasting into October. It may not be winter hardy, but the rate and quality of growth in a single season merits more recognition for summer display. Stems are covered in a rash of scarlet hairs that define the elegant profile, and each carries a succession of coral-red flowers in ascending whorls. Even when petals drop, the dark-red calyces command admiring glances. Take cuttings at the end of summer to overwinter for next year.

Height 1.5m.
Origin Native to South America.
Conditions Free-draining loam, or perfect for pots.
Hardiness RHS H2.
Season July to September. **CM**



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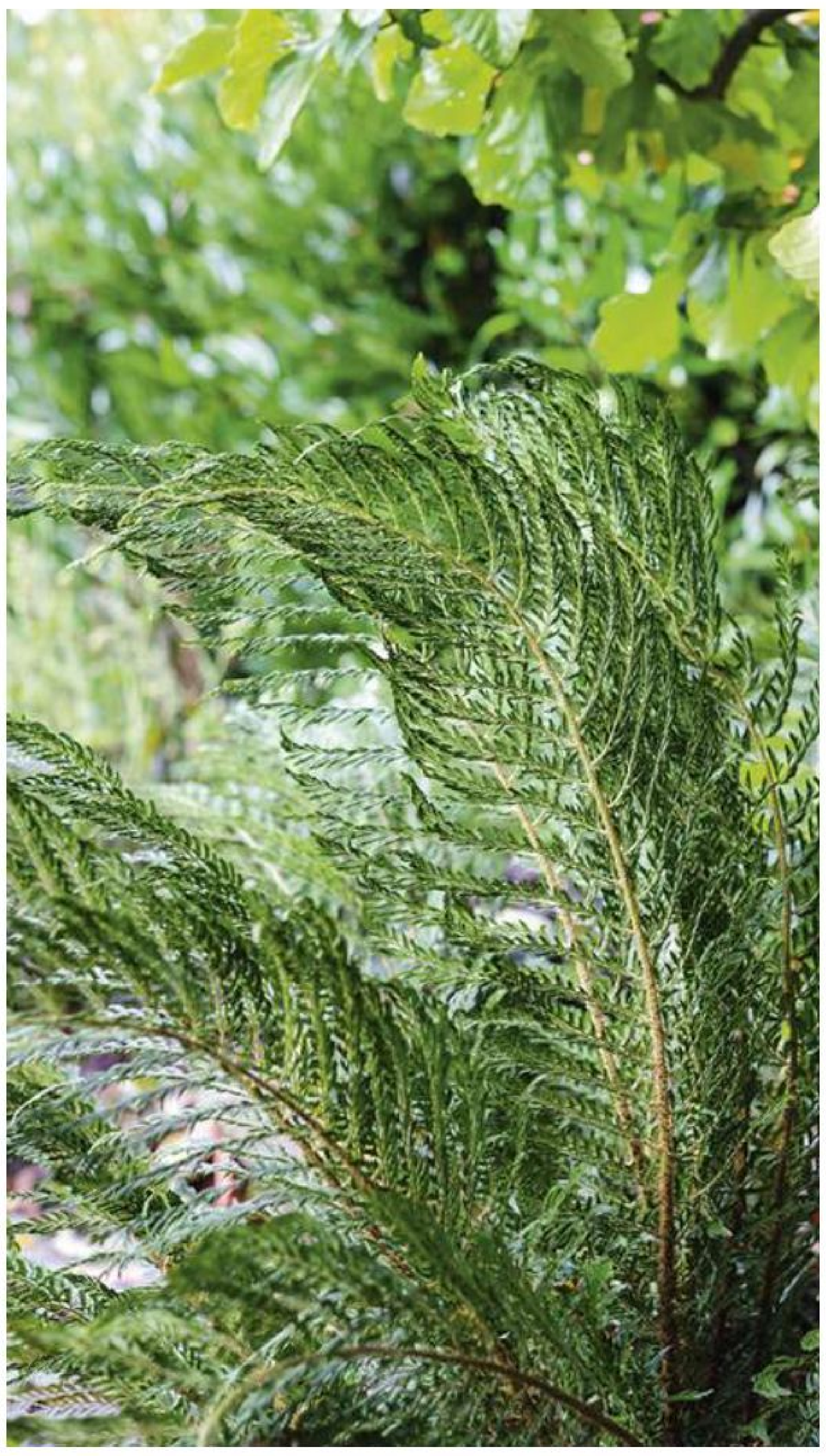


JASON INGRAM

POLYSTICHUM SETIFERUM 'PULCHERRIMUM BEVIS'

This fern has long, arching fronds that taper to an almost braided tip as the final leaves intertwine, giving it its characteristic elegant droop. The lacy leaves are more substantial than they look, almost plastic to the touch, making this tougher than most ferns. Standing one metre high and a metre across, it looks a bit like a tree fern without a trunk, giving a luxurious tropical air to the garden all year round. Give it plenty of space to show off its sculptural shape. AGM.

Height 1m.
Origin Europe, found in a hedgerow in Devon in the 19th century.
Conditions Light shade; best if not too dry, but tolerant once established.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 6a-8b.
Season All year round. **DW**

FUCHSIA 'ENFANT PRODIGUE'

A large and vigorous hardy fuchsia with long, leafy stems that gently arch over under the sheer weight of flowers. Carried in loose clusters, pointed, bright-red buds hang gracefully before splitting open, splaying the four red sepals horizontally to reveal a fat, rich, velvety-purple skirt of unfurling petals. The male stamens and the long female pistil, both identical in colour to the sepals, protrude prominently from the centre, making an exquisite shape. Free flowering right until the first frosts, rich in colour, and refined with great poise, this is a cut above the rest.

Height 2m.
Origin Bred in 1887 by Lemoine in France.
Conditions Full sun in moist, well-drained soil.
Hardiness USDA 6a-9b.
Season July to November. **FG**

SHARON PEARSON

THE VERSATILE PALE-GREEN COLOUR FORMS A COOLER BRIDGE BETWEEN FIERY REDS

KNIPHOFIA 'GREEN JADE'

KNIPHOFIA 'GREEN JADE'

Raised and introduced by Beth Chatto, this plant rises to the occasion when borders begin to look dry and forlorn. Its elegant profile has great architectural strength, requiring no staking if nutrient levels are kept lean. The effect offers interesting contrast when threaded through some of the ripening mid-height grasses, such as *Panicum virgatum*, or *Calamagrostis brachytricha*. The pale-green colour, fading to creamy white, is incredibly versatile, and can be used to form a cooler bridge between the many fiery reds and oranges of late summer.

Height 1.2m.
Origin Species found in mountains and upland grasslands of South Africa.
Conditions Well-drained soil in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 7a-10b.
Season End of August through September. **CM**

HOWARD RICE / GAP PHOTOS

JASON INGRAM

AGERATINA ALTISSIMA 'BRAUNLAUB'

Striking, high-colour plants sometimes need a foil and I love the way this plant can be offered up to such a wide range of classics to achieve the necessary bridge between strong or strident colours. Helenium, rudbeckia, aster and crocosmia are eased into a harmonious group when partnered with *Ageratina*. Groups of this plant growing on the nursery will regularly attract clouds of butterflies – a good reason to include them in any garden. *Ageratina* was previously grouped with *Eupatorium* in its classification, and the characteristics are very similar.

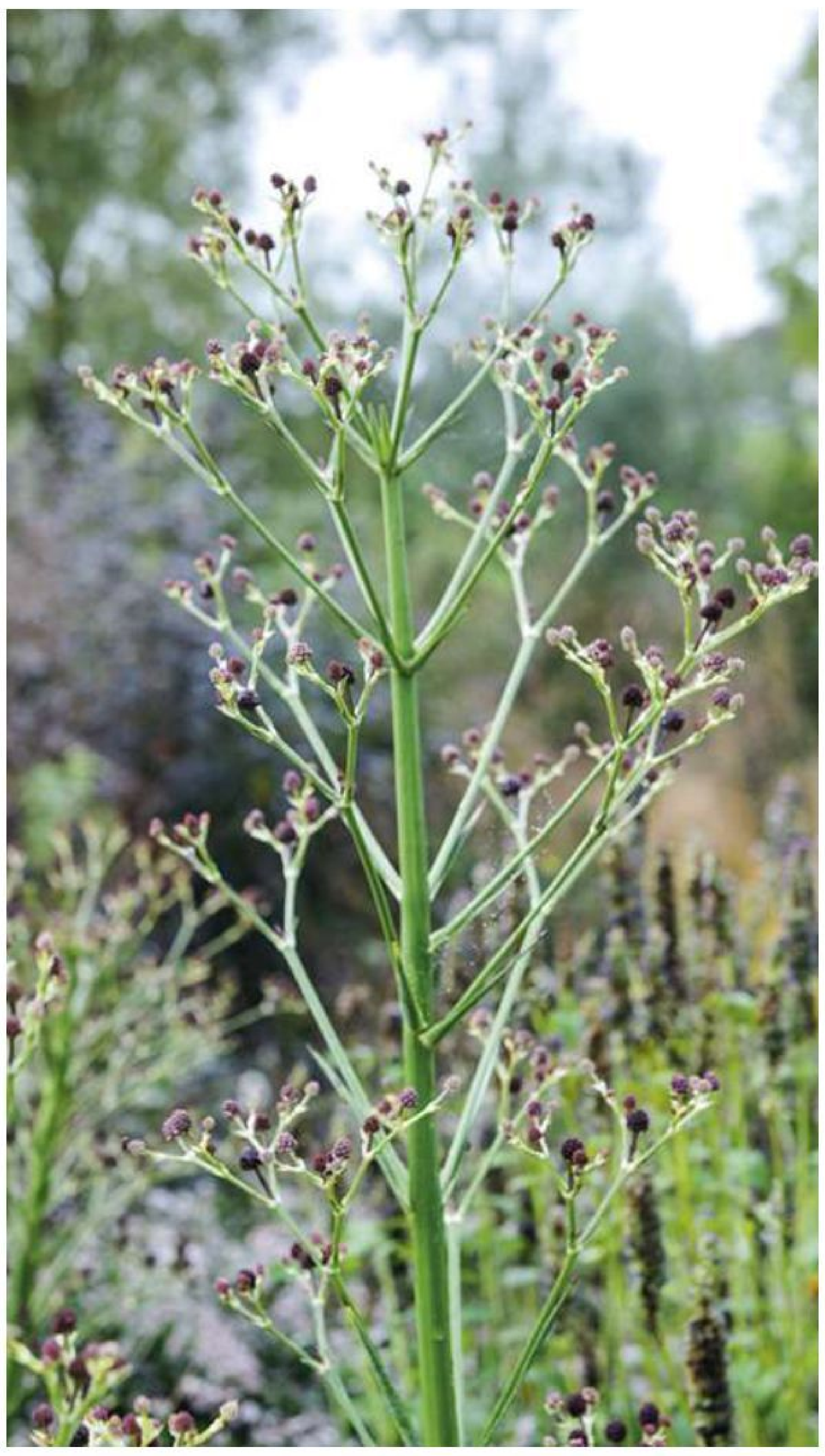
Height 1m.
Origin North America.
Conditions Free-draining garden loam.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.
Season Late August to October. **CM**

SYMPHYOTRICHUM LATERIFLORUM VAR. *HORIZONTALIS*

A dark, small-leaved, small-flowered Michaelmas daisy that produces thousands of tiny, off-white, pink-blushed flowers each with a rosy-mauve centre. These sprays billow out from horizontally branching stems, creating as Christopher Lloyd described it a 'seething mass' of pink foam. Plants are erect, dense and twiggy, keeping their shape well into the winter when the intricate brown skeletons and delicate seedheads are dusted white with frost. Cut down to the ground by mid-March to make way for new growth. AGM.

Height 60cm.
Origin North America.
Conditions Full sun in good moist but well-drained soil.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.
Season September to October. **FG**

SHARON PEARSON



JASON INGRAM

ERYNGIUM PANDANIFOLIUM ‘PHYSIC PURPLE’

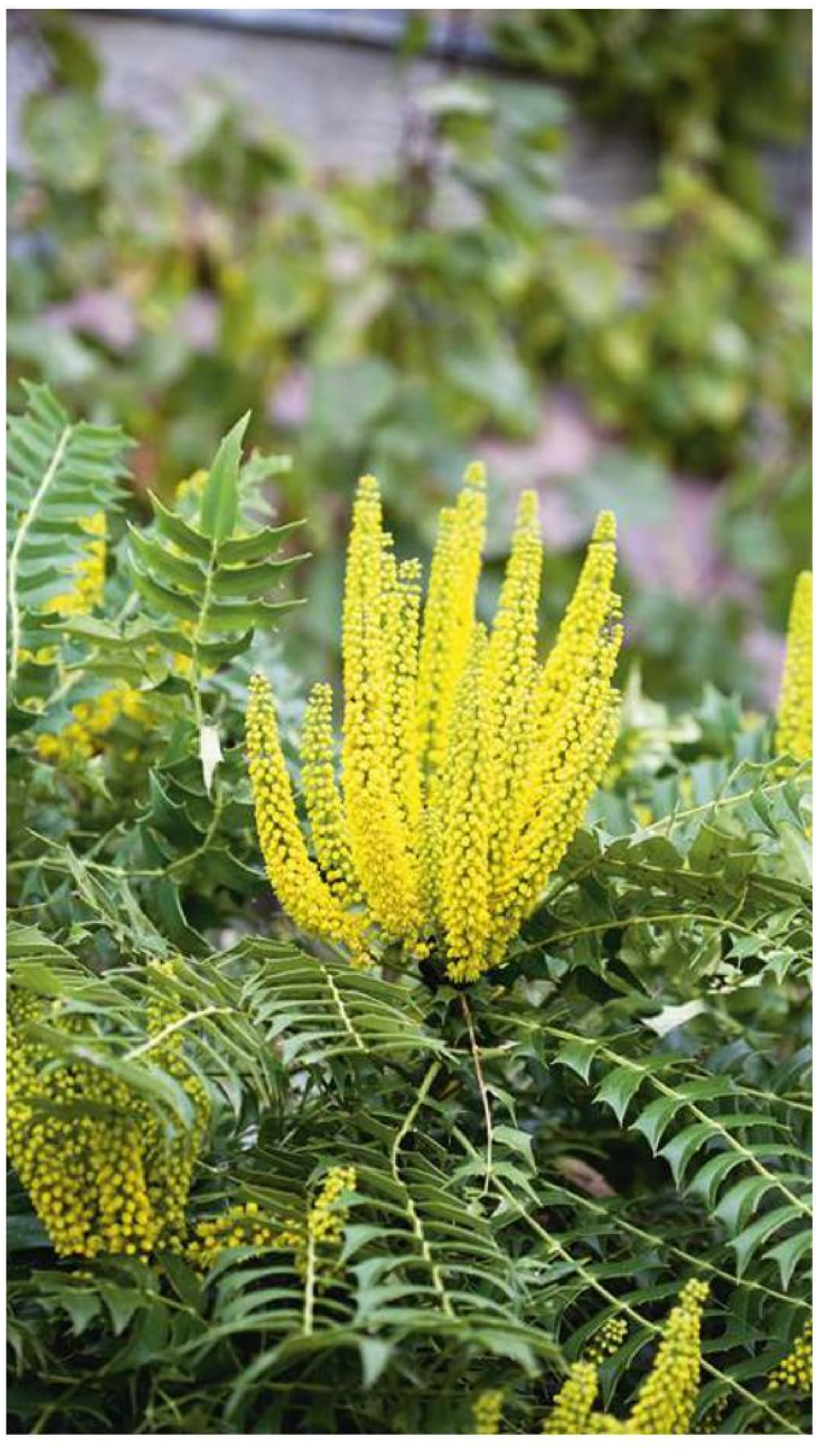
In Europe we think of eryngiums as prickly sea hollies with flowers in a big ruff of bracts. But those from South America have long, sword-shaped leaves, looking more like kniphofias. This species is one of the biggest, with spiny-edged leaves, up to a metre long, radiating in every direction. In September a flowering stem emerges, each branching side shoot tipped with a small thimble in October and November. In ‘Physic Purple’ these are a deep, purply red.

Height 2m.
Origin South America. This cultivar was selected at Chelsea Physic Garden.
Conditions Sun, not too dry; better in a sheltered site.
Hardiness USDA 7b-9b.
Season August to December. **DW**

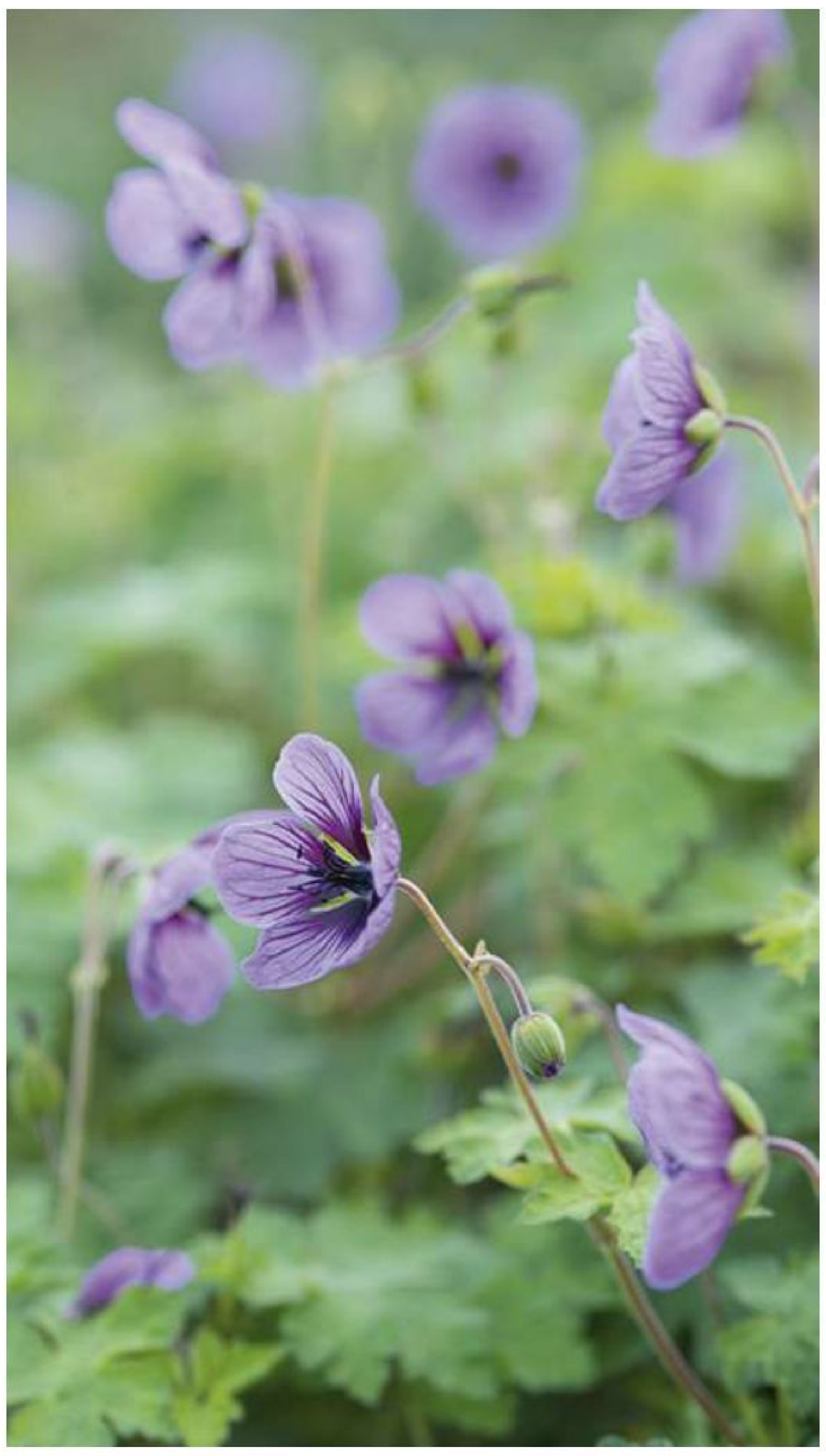
MAHONIA OIWAKENSIS SUBSP. *LOMARIIFOLIA*

Erect stems that are gaunt, as if on the edge of starvation, and naked from the ground up, carry umbrellas of long, pinnate, evergreen leaves made up of numerous holly-like leaflets. The stems are patterned with deeply fissured bark and the leaflets are stiff, leathery and neatly arranged in pairs along a midrib when viewed from above. Globular, bright-yellow flowers radiate out from the branch tips followed by glaucous green berries that mature blue-black. AGM.

Height 3m.
Origin Southeast China and Myanmar, cultivated by L Johnston in 1931.
Conditions Warm sheltered corner in sun or part shade in moist, well-drained soil.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season Flowers October to November. Foliage all year round. **FG**



SHARON PEARSON



MAAYKE DE RIDDER

GERANIUM ‘SALOME’

This very good plant arose on the nursery of my good friend Elizabeth Strangman in about 1981. She and Ernst Pagels were my propagation role models and Elizabeth’s Washfield Nursery was one of the finest I’ve ever seen. Elizabeth only propagated the very best – I’m always tempted to propagate too much. Among the mass of new patented geraniums, ‘Salome’ shines like a fiery candle with big, pale-violet petals that have darker veins running to a very dark centre. If you place it in partial shade it will flower until the first frosts.

Height 60cm.
Origin *G. lambertii* x *G. procurrens*.
Conditions Humus-rich soil in dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.
Season June to October. **HK**

AUTUMN AND WINTER

These plants will prolong the display into winter bringing form, texture and radiance to the garden.

COTONEASTER HORIZONTALIS

Much underrated, this is the most spectacular of all cotoneasters. Deciduous, with a low centre of gravity, it has great, flat, fan-like branches that spread horizontally. These are decorated in herringbone twigs dotted with small, dark-green, broadly oval, keeled leaves that alternate along opposite rows. The May flowers are small and white-blushed pink, and are inconspicuous until the hum of bees makes you stop. Abundant, bright-red fruit follows, creating a warming glow in October, and lasts until devoured by blackbirds. Deep crimson autumn colour adds to the show before the leaves drop to reveal the most elegant of skeletons.

Height 3m.
Origin Western China.
Conditions Most soils in full sun or partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 5a-7b.
Season All year round. **FG**

SHARON PEARSON

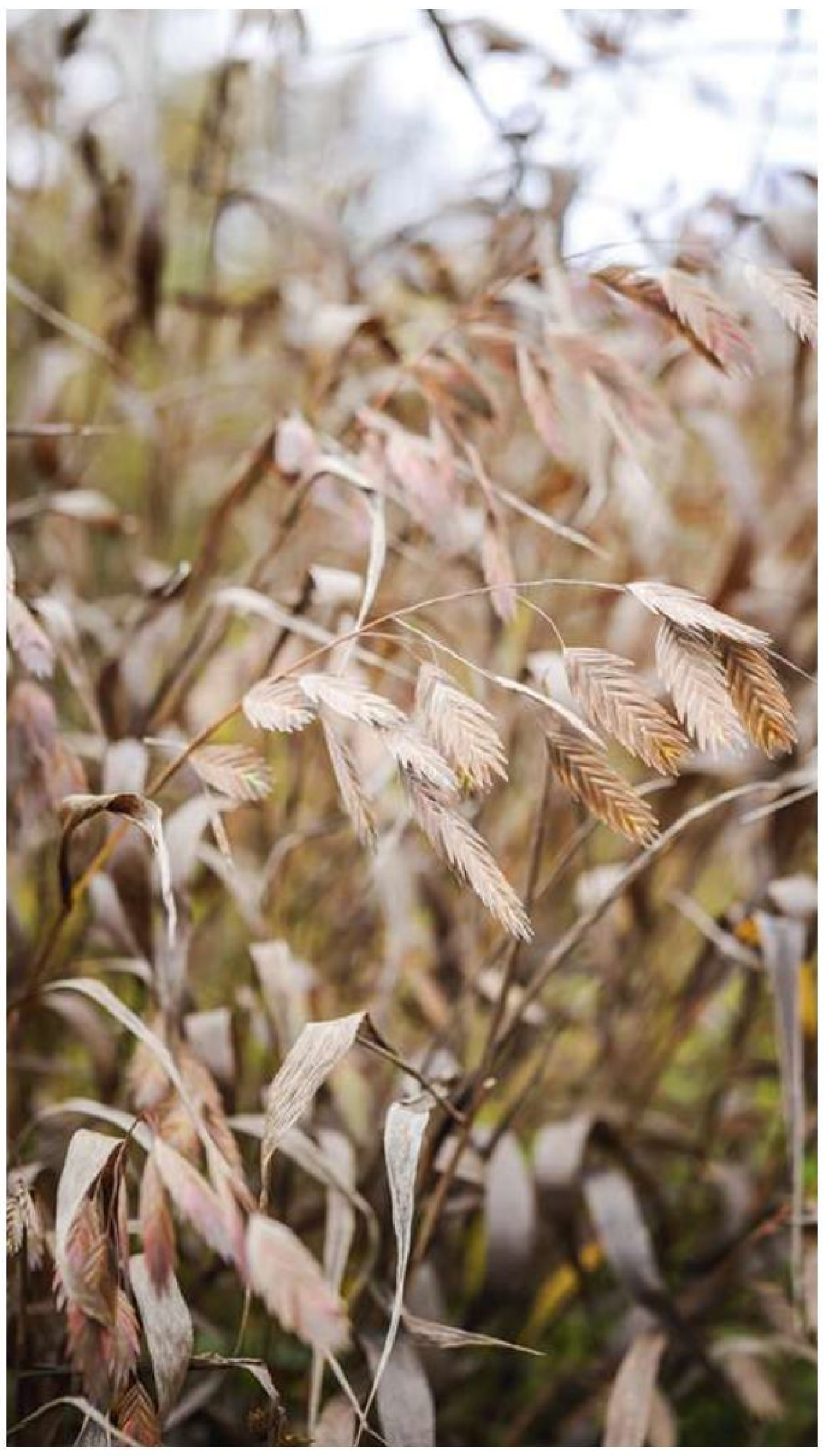
IN WINTER, BACKLIT BY THE SUN, ITS COLOURED STEMS AND FOLIAGE ARE MAGICAL

PHYSOCARPUS OPULIFOLIUS LADY IN RED (= 'TUILAD')

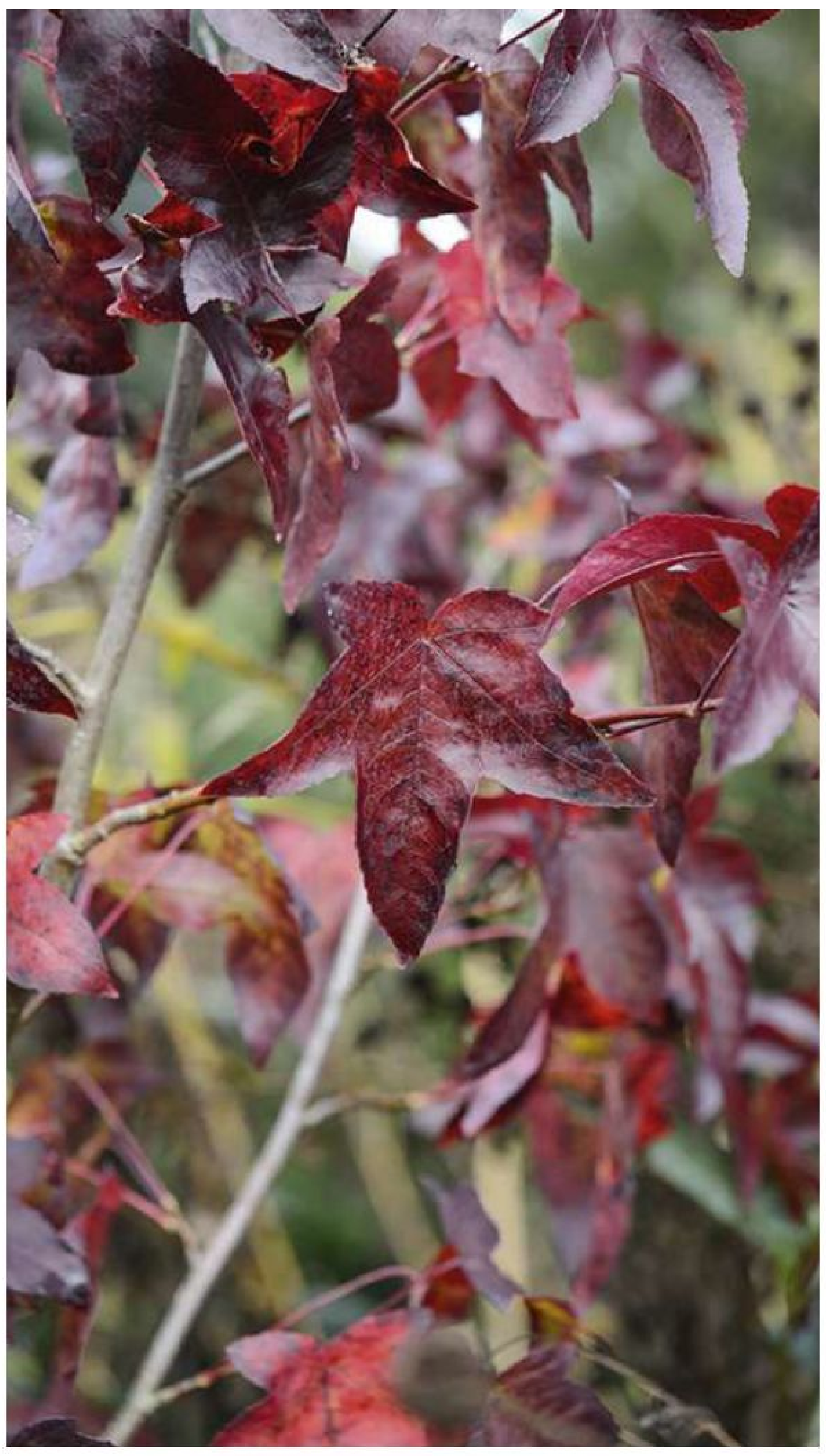
CHASMANTHIUM LATIFOLIUM

In its native habitat, this woodland grass is usually found on the banks of rivers and streams in light shade. Known colloquially as spangle grass, it resembles a flattened quaking grass and has an elegant arching habit. I have seen magnificent specimens but have never grown it well myself, perhaps growing it in shade that was too deep where the flower stems flopped. The foliage is rather like a small bamboo with broad blades and flowers that appear in late summer; it starts green but bronze and purple tints suffuse the flowers and foliage as temperatures fall.

Height 90cm-1.2m.
Origin Southeast USA.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil in dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 4a-10b.
Season Foliage August to December. **MC**



JASON INGRAM



JASON INGRAM

LIQUIDAMBAR STYRACIFLUA 'PENWOOD'

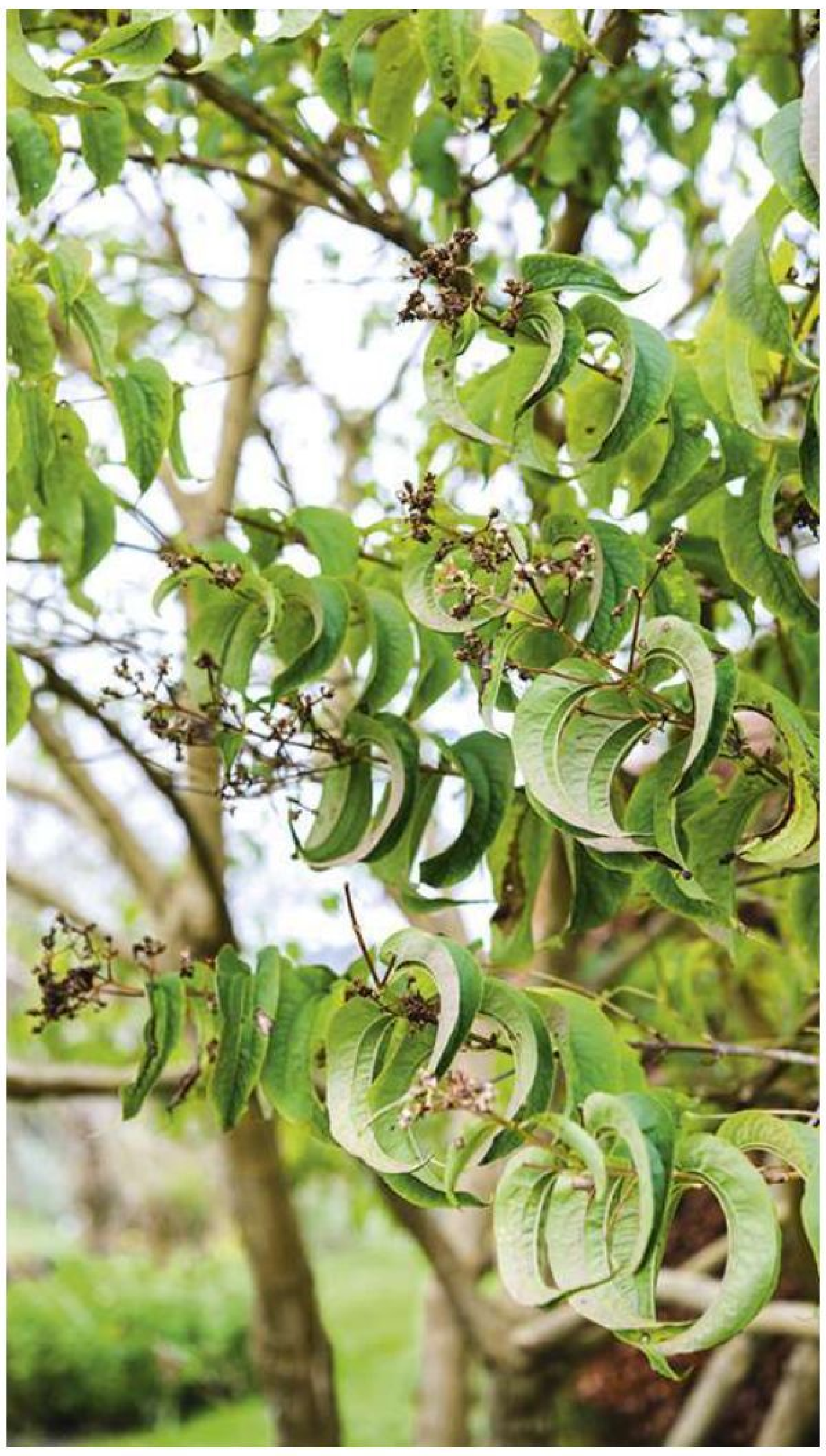
This notable wine-red form was chosen from a batch of more typical amber and crimson seedlings by Doug Harris in 1985. He noted that this form held on to the foliage longer into the autumn – to late November or early December. He named it for his nursery, Penwood. The glossy foliage of *Liquidambar* is palmately lobed, similar to that of some of the maples, but is carried alternately on stiff twigs. This large pyramidal-shaped tree is best grown in rich, moist soils. AGM.

Height 10m.
Origin Garden origin, originally North America.
Conditions Good fertile, acid to neutral soil in full sun or partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.
Season Foliage October to November. **MR**

HEPTACODIUM MICONIOIDES

Discovered in China in 1908 but not introduced into cultivation until 1980, *Heptacodium* is a wonderful small tree or large shrub. It is beautiful every month of the year. In winter its peeling bark and elegant silhouette make it stand out. In spring the pairs of deeply veined leaves start to grow, eventually meeting at the tips to make a circle. The circles line up so you can run your arm up the branch through a series of bracelets. Clusters of fragrant, white flowers appear in September, followed by rosy bracts. Truly a tree for all seasons. AGM.

Height 4-8m.
Origin China.
Conditions Sun or light shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5.
Season All year round. **DW**



JASON INGRAM

JASON INGRAM

PHYSOCARPUS OPULIFOLIUS LADY IN RED (= 'TUILAD')

In recent years there has been a proliferation of *Physocarpus opulifolius* cultivars with richly coloured foliage and stems. Currently, there is a trial of these deciduous shrubs (due to end in 2019) at RHS Wisley where many of the recent introductions can be seen together. I have always loved Lady in Red, which has uplifting, bright-red, palmate foliage, corymbs of small, cream flowers and mahogany stems. In winter, backlit by the sun, its coloured stems and foliage can take on almost magical properties. AGM.

Height 1.5m.
Origin Eastern North America.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil in sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 2b-8b.
Season Autumn foliage October to November. **MC**

GINKGO BILOBA

The beautiful maidenhair tree is wonderful for the garden, and comes into its own in autumn when the pea-green foliage turns a crisp buttercup yellow. In cold, still weather it will hold the colourful foliage for weeks before decorating the ground with a carpet of golden leaves. Plant in good soil and avoid waterlogging; otherwise it's tolerant of drought and pollution. There are many dwarf or slow-growing forms available for small gardens, and if you've ever visited Central Park, New York, in autumn, you'll know to avoid the female trees, as their golden plum-fruit has an unpleasant smell.

Height 30m.
Origin Southern China.
Conditions Any rich soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b.
Season Autumn foliage October to November. **MR**

JASON INGRAM

JASON INGRAM

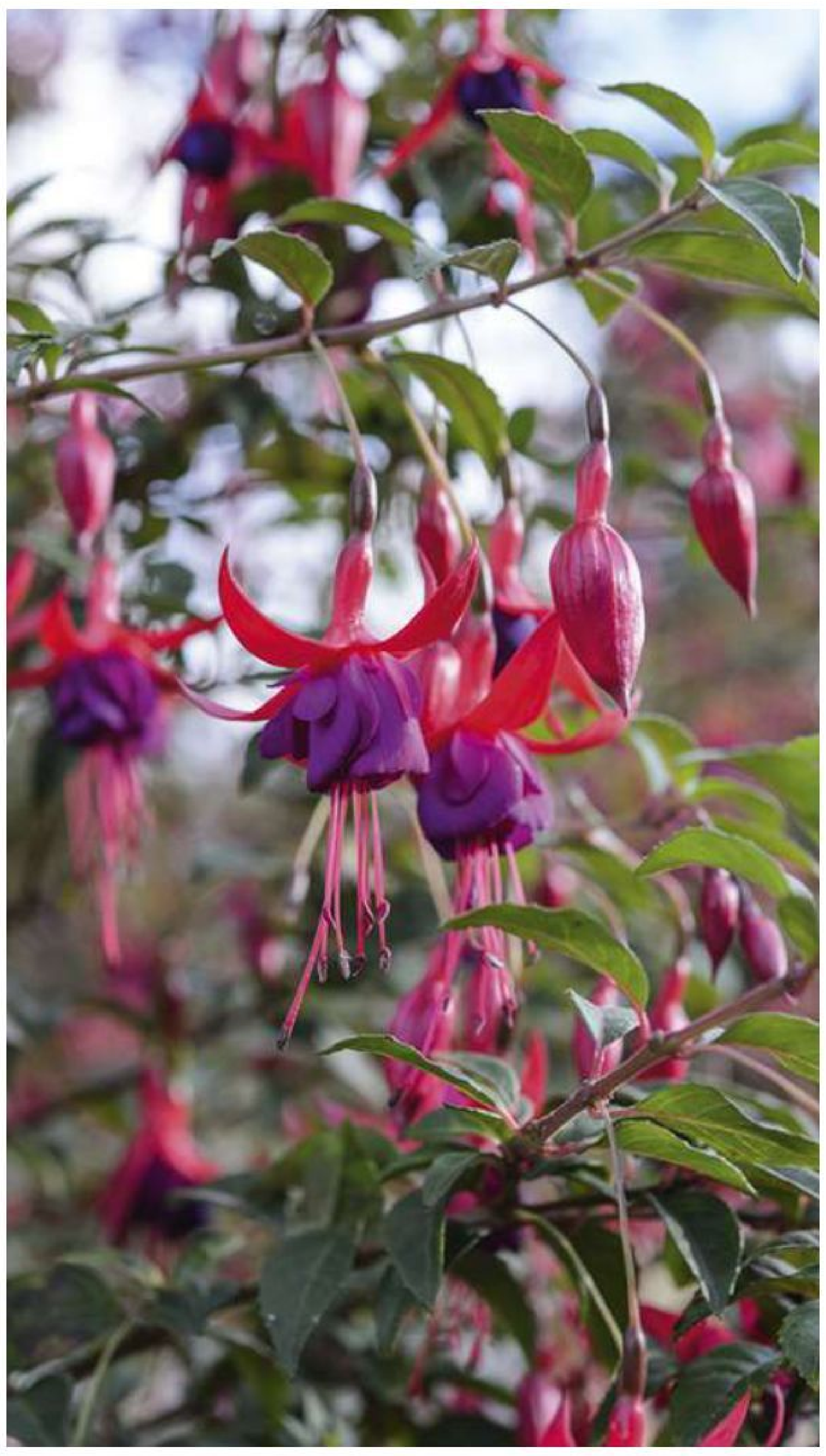
PITTOSPORUM TENUIFOLIUM 'TOM THUMB'

A slow-growing evergreen shrub making a dense, compact mound of shining, purple-black foliage. Its naturally tidy habit makes it a good substitute for large box balls, if lightly clipped to shape in spring. The new leaves emerge pale, lime-green, astonishing against the old purple foliage. By June the whole plant is nearly black. The small leaves are shiny and wavy-edged, reflecting light at different angles. It's not always hardy, but mine have survived our worst winters here against a south-facing wall. AGM.

Height 1m.
Origin New Zealand.
Conditions Fertile, moist, but well-drained soil in sun.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season All year round. **DW**

THE SEEDHEADS ARE LOVELY COVERED IN DEW OR RIMED WITH HOAR FROST

LIGULARIA 'BRITT MARIE CRAWFORD'



JASON INGRAM

FUCHSIA 'RICCARTONII'

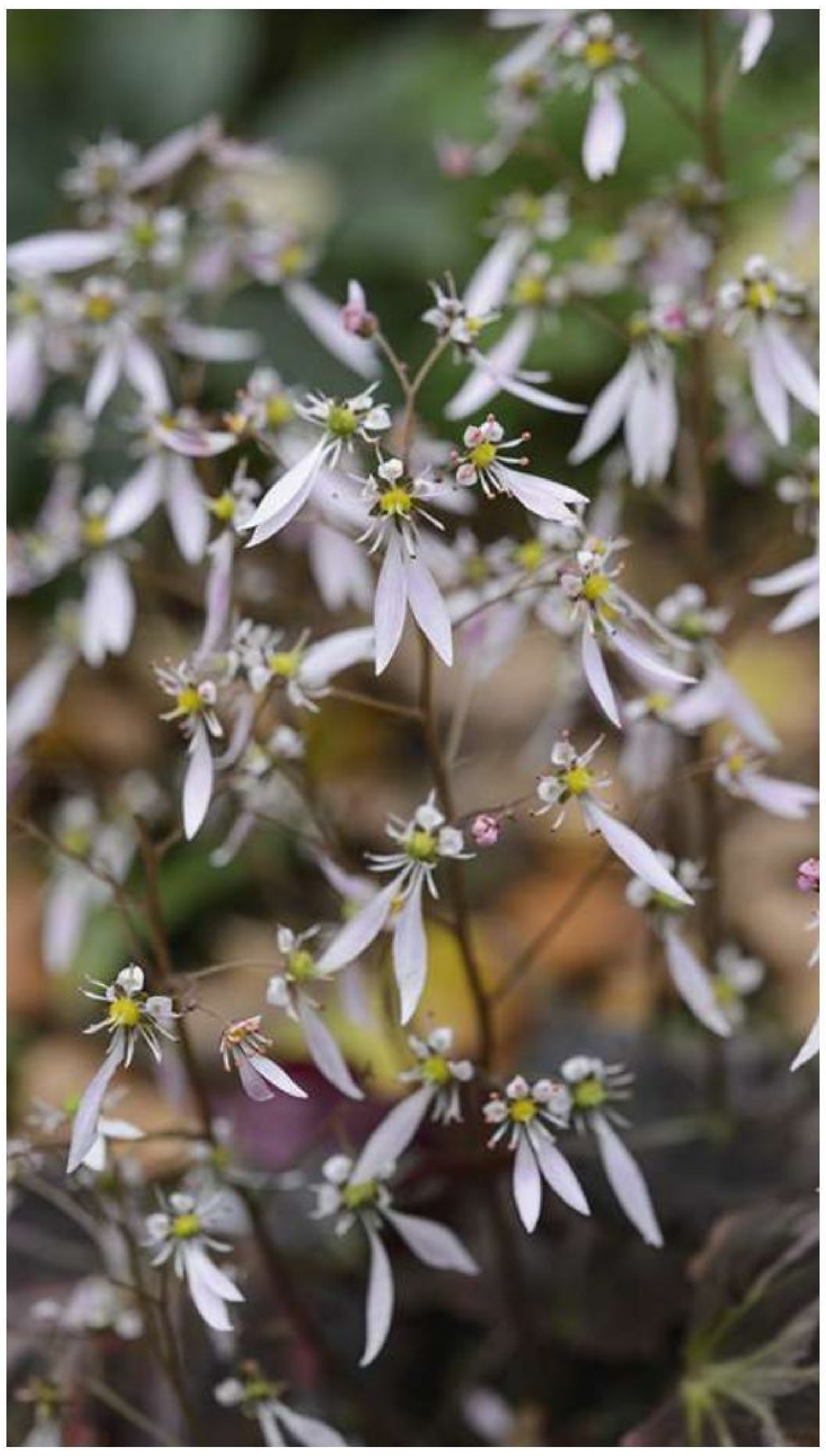
As late as November, *Fuchsia* 'Riccartonii' continues to send out blooms on the tips of the new growth. It may not last much longer than this, but when most other plants in the garden are on the ebb, it's nice to have this small reminder of summer. *F.* 'Riccartonii' has larger flowers than other types of fuchsia and a sturdy, upright habit that has given rise to it being used for hedging. It likes a little shade, but will also take full sun. Provide good soil and cut back hard in spring. AGM.

Height 1.5m.
Origin Garden origin, originally South America.
Conditions Any good soil in sun or partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 8a-10b.
Season July to November. **MR**

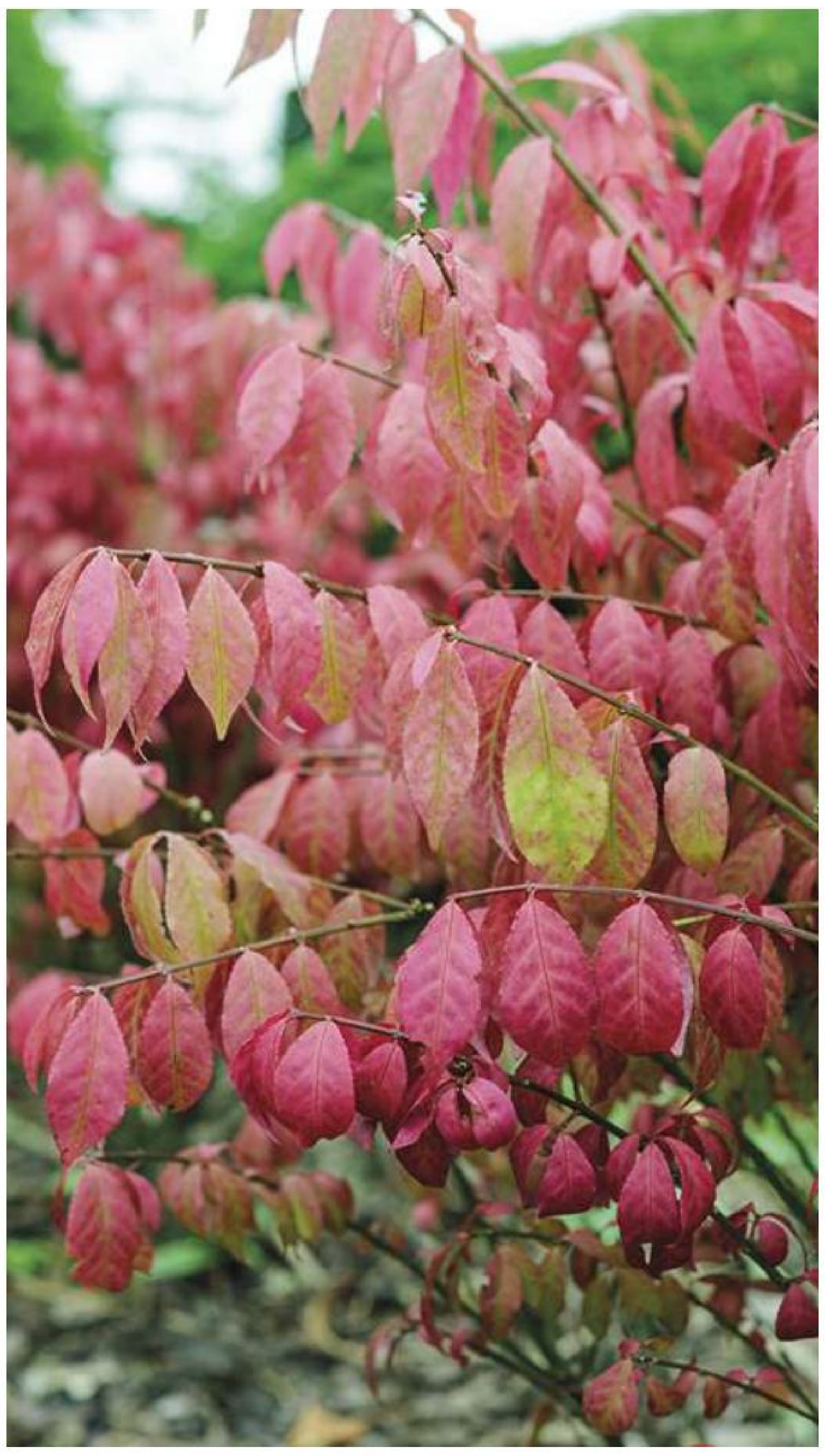
SAXIFRAGA 'SILVER VELVET'

This small, deciduous saxifrage makes a good pot plant, but is also perfect for those difficult shady corners where neatness is sought. It makes small rosettes of scalloped, rich-burgundy leaves marked with silvery variegation. Flowering occurs surprisingly late – in November – when numerous small, white, zygomorphic flowers are produced in loose sprays and held just above the foliage. Although it does best in moist, well-nourished soil, it can take dry conditions once established. Protect against vine weevil.

Height 10cm.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Well-drained, humus-rich soil in sun or shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 6a-8b.
Season September to October. **MR**



JASON INGRAM



JASON INGRAM

EUONYMUS ALATUS 'COMPACTUS'

I came across this form of the winged spindle many years ago at the New York Botanical Garden where it was used as a hedge. Even in the spectacular US 'fall' it stood out with remarkable crimson autumn colouring. During my student tenure at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, I became more familiar with the plant growing in the rock garden where every autumn it coloured brilliantly no matter the weather. It is one of the best shrubs for autumn colour, lasting around three weeks, before painting the ground red with fallen leaves. AGM.

Height 2m.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Any rich soil in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.
Season Autumn foliage October to November. **MR**

LIGULARIA 'BRITT MARIE CRAWFORD'

This moisture-loving member of the daisy family has large, glossy, kidney-shaped leaves with a dramatic dark-purple reverse, and the flowers are a deep orange-yellow colour – a striking combination. Unfortunately, the fleshy foliage is caviar to slugs and snails, which can strip the leaves overnight. The seedheads are particularly attractive covered in dew or rimed with hoar frost on a clear winter's day. AGM.

Height 90cm.
Origin Myanmar, central and western China, Japan.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil in sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.
Season Seedheads October. **MC**

JASON INGRAM

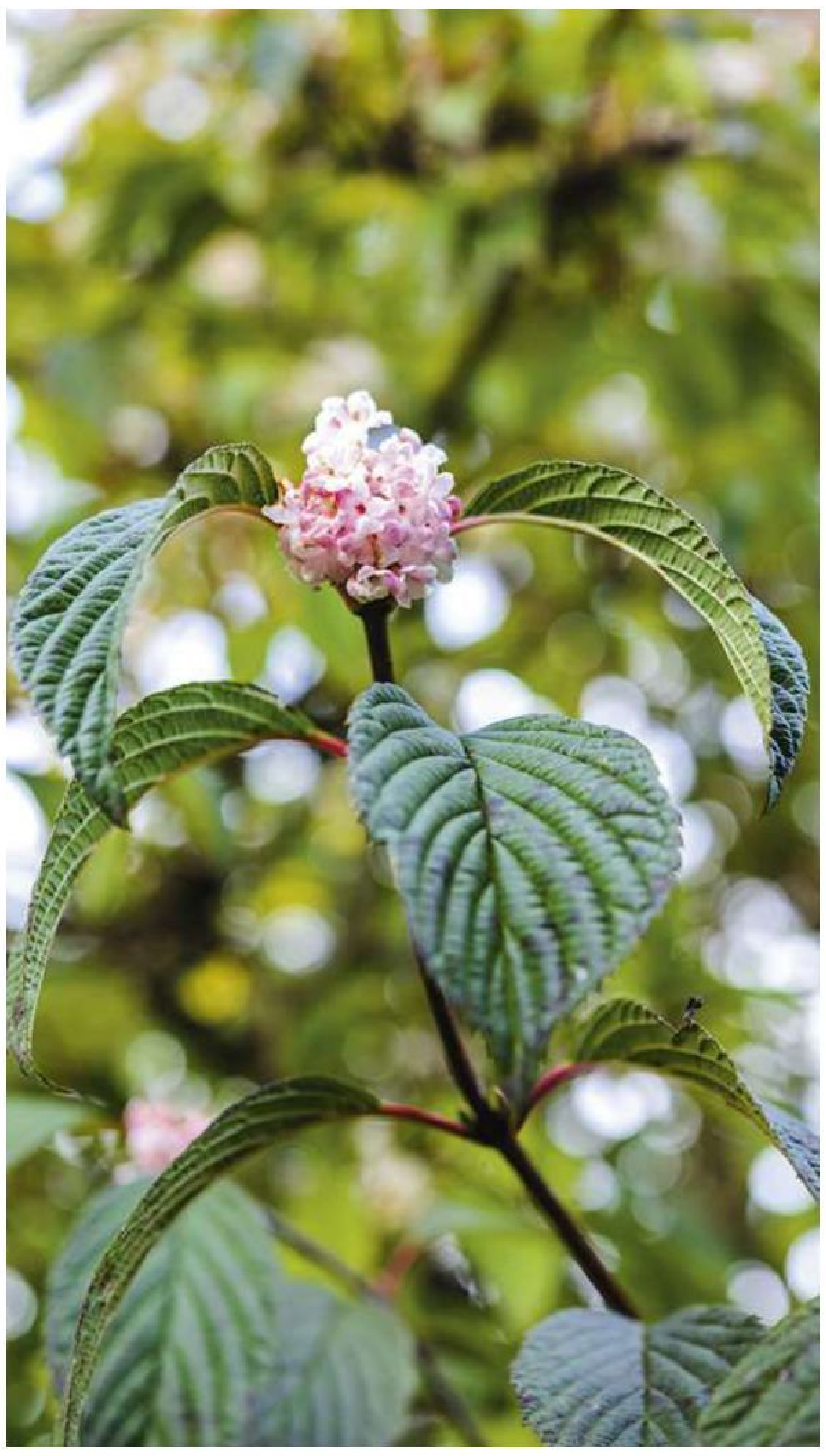
MAGNIFICENT PURPLE FLOWERS BOAST PROMINENT CORKSCREW STAMENS

TIBOUCHINA URVILLEANA

VIBURNUM X *BODNANTENSE* 'DAWN'

An old, cottage garden favourite, this is one of the earliest shrubs to bloom. Tough as old boots, it is one of the plants that survives and even thrives in abandoned gardens, gradually spreading. Despite being rather boring in summer, it is worth having in a neglected corner so you can pick a few sprigs to bring into the house in winter. The pale-pink flowers are borne on naked stems in mild spells throughout the winter. The intensely sweet, spicy fragrance promises as early as November that spring is on the way. AGM.

Height 3m.
Origin Hybrid developed at Bodnant Garden in Wales in 1934-35.
Conditions Sun or partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-7b.
Season November to March. **DW**



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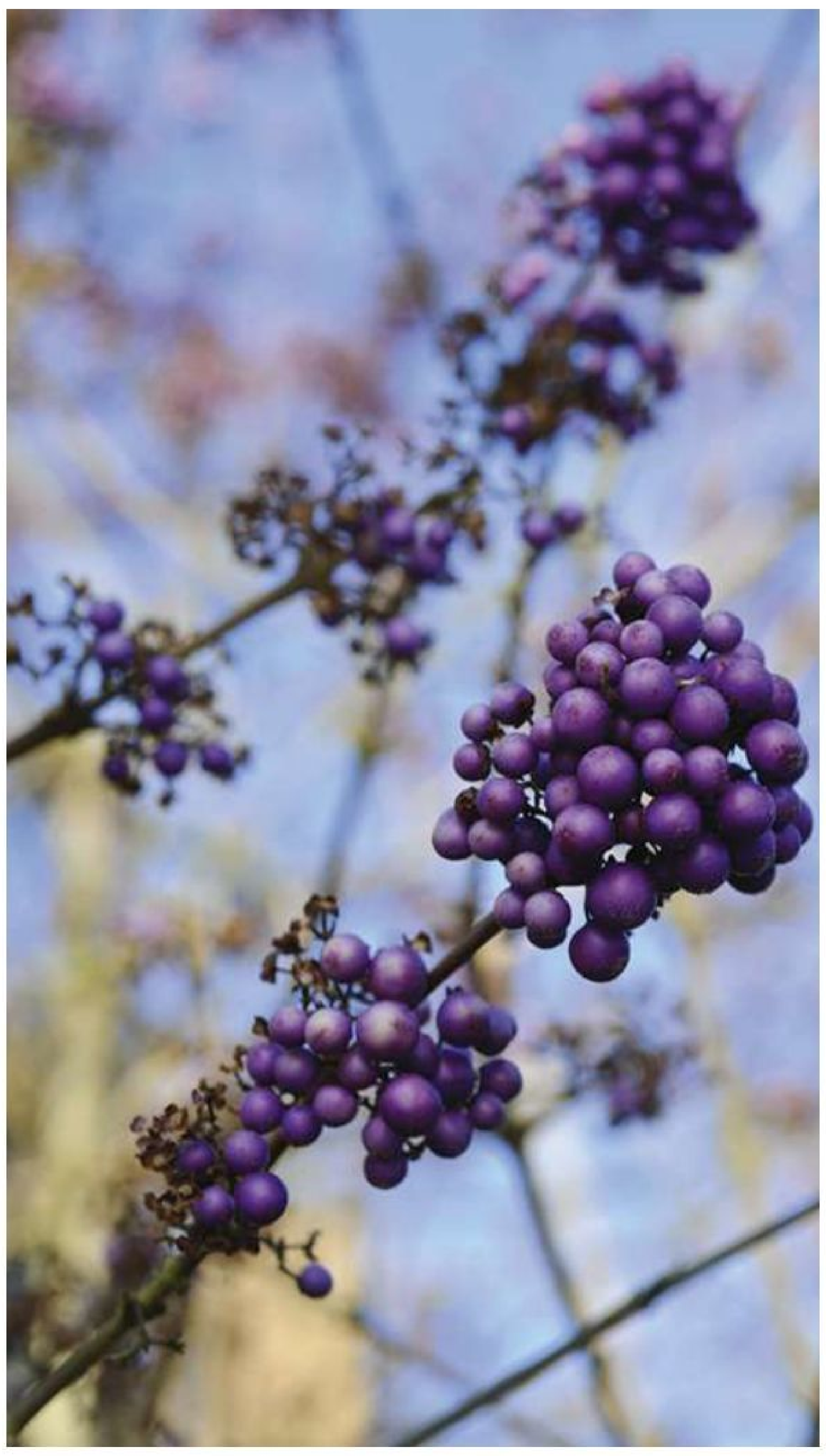


JASON INGRAM

CALLICARPA BODINIERI VAR. *GIRALDII* 'PROFUSION'

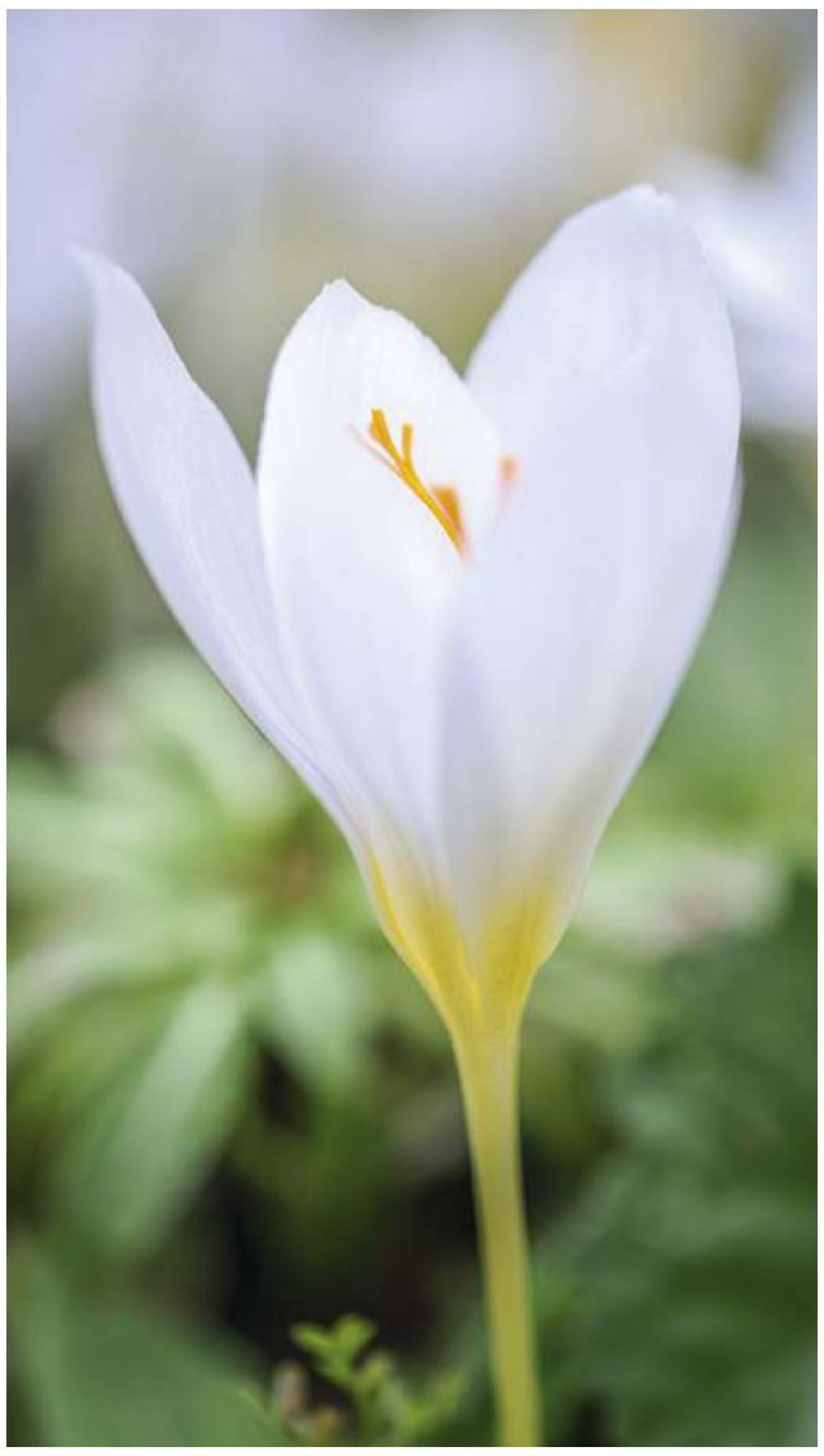
As a child I used to buy aniseed pearls, which were the same iridescent purple as these berries. I can see why birds find them irresistible. Young leaves are flushed bronze in spring, maturing through green to a beautiful rose madder in the autumn. When the leaves fall, clusters of lilac and purple fruits are thrown into prominence. This self-fertile cultivar can be relied upon for plentiful fruiting without the need for multiple specimens. AGM.

Height 2.5m.
Origin Widespread from the east to the west of China.
Conditions Most fertile loams from acidic to lightly alkaline.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.
Season Flowers July to August, fruits October to December. **CM**

CROCUS 'ZEPHYR'

As the nights draw in and the weather begins to deteriorate, early autumn bulbs begin to emerge through the newly moistened earth. It always amazes me that the rounded delicate flowers of autumn crocuses can withstand adverse conditions. This one was raised by the Dutch nurseryman Thomas Hoog and is a hybrid between *C. speciosus* and *C. pulchellus* with the larger size of the former and the white anthers of the latter, and has almost translucent pale-blue petals with a tracery of darker veins and a deep-yellow throat. Flowers appear before the leaves. AGM.

Height 10-15cm.
Origin Southeast Europe, hybrid.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil in sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.
Season September to October. **MC**



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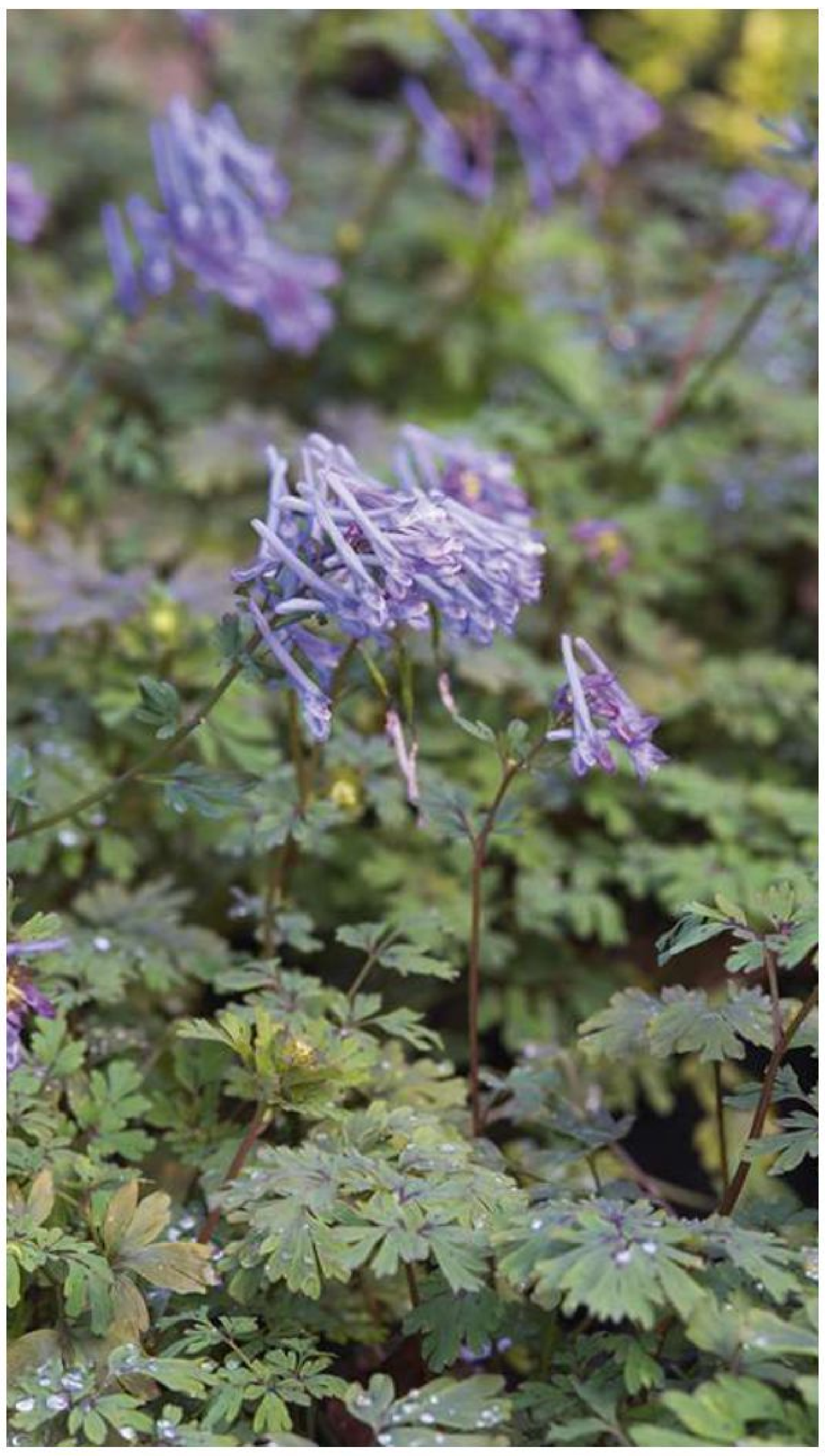


MAAYKE DE RIDDER

CORYDALIS FLEXUOSA 'PURPLE LEAF'

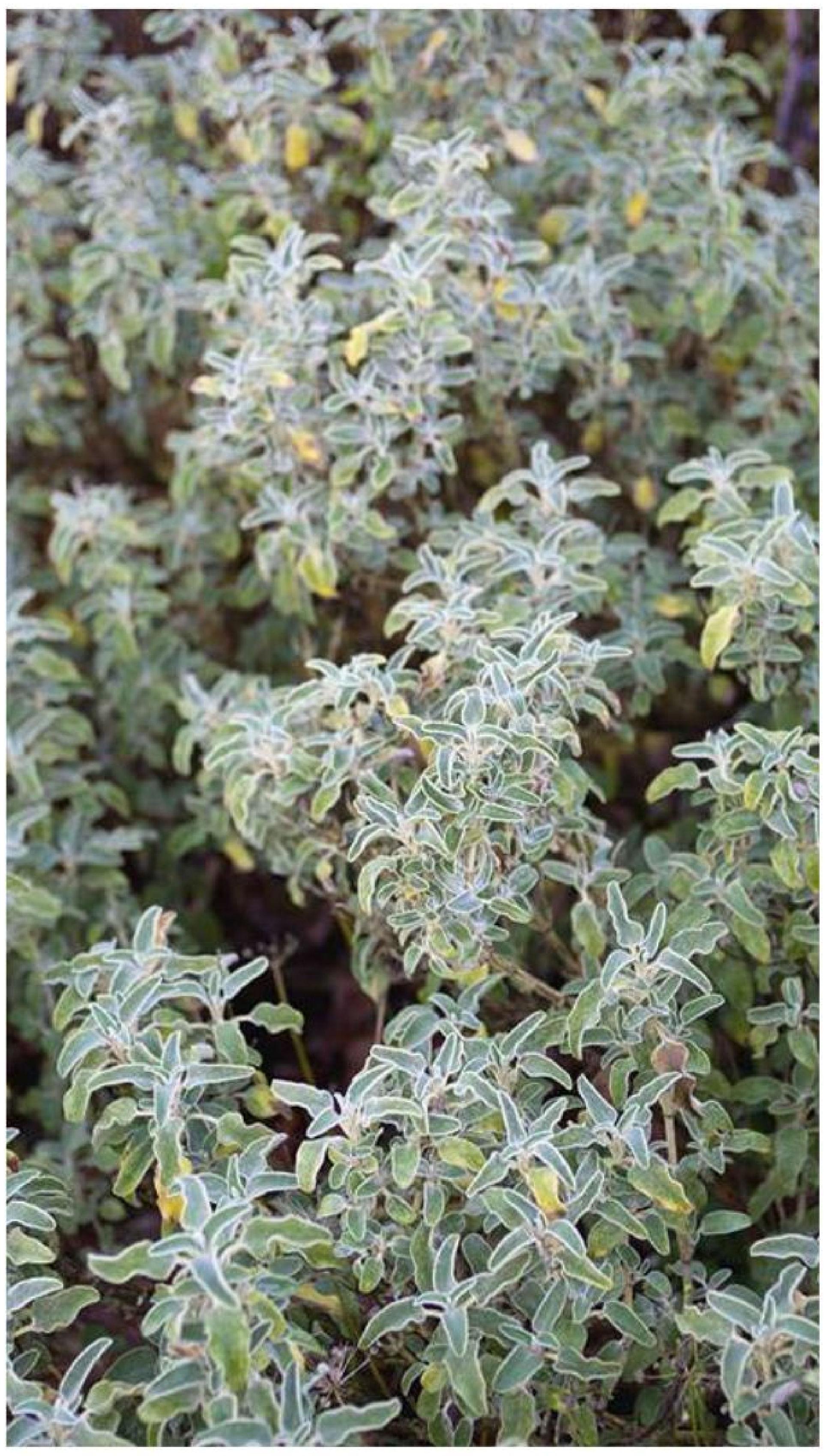
This cultivar with purple-flushed leaves is one of three corydalis introduced from China in the late 1980s. It is an extremely good nurseryman's plant, because it divides so easily. Normally, it flowers in April and May and then takes a rest in summer. But then in autumn, if the weather is mild, it will suddenly reappear and you will suddenly catch a glimpse of fresh, crispy leaves and clean, light-blue flowers – and that is always a welcome surprise at this time of the year.

Height 30cm.
Origin China.
Conditions Humus-rich soil in partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season October (and May). **HK**

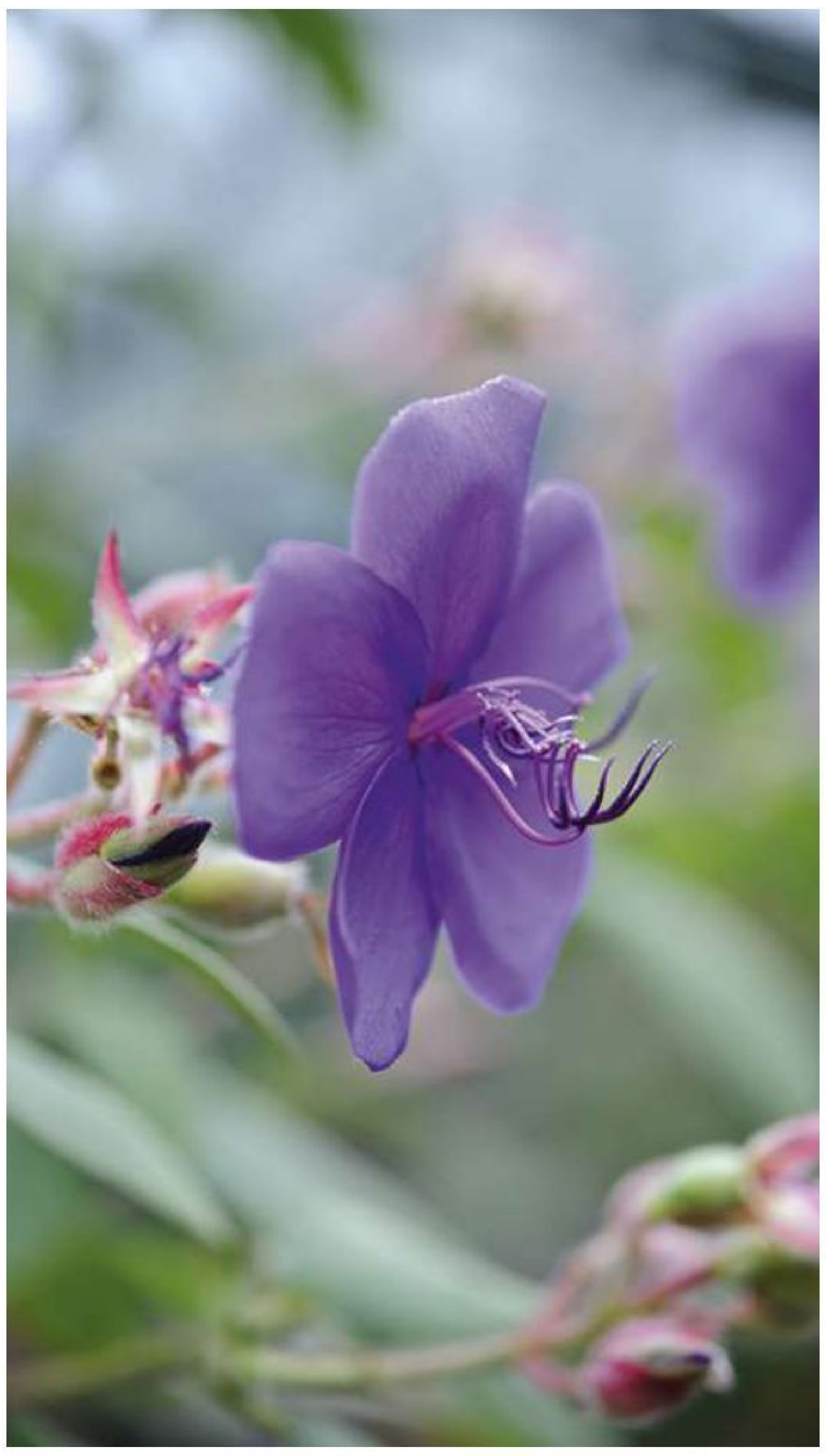
PHLOMIS GRANDIFLORA 'LLOYD'S SILVER'

A wide-spreading, evergreen shrub with narrow, sage-like, grey-green leaves, deeply wrinkled in texture, and showing prominent pale undersides. Both foliage and young stems are covered in minute hairs, creating a soft textured wave of silver and making a good foil for all other colours. Bright-yellow, hooded flowers cover the bush in midsummer. These are held in distinctive whorls in the upper leaf axils. Attractive seedheads follow but plants look cleaner if these are removed. Our specimen in the Long Border at Great Dixter wraps itself around sugar-candy pink phloxes.

Height 1m.
Origin Mediterranean.
Conditions Well-drained soil in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 7a-11.
Season All year round. **FG**



SHARON PEARSON



JASON INGRAM

TIBOUCHINA URVILLEANA

Keeping a stand of these in large pots on the terrace creates an illusion that summer lingers on – even though they have to be taken in to protect against night frost. The deeply furrowed leaves have beautiful silvered undersides that contrast with the rash of red hairs on each stem. Branches are crowned with plentiful saucer-shaped flowers in magnificent purple, each boasting a prominent centre of corkscrew stamens. AGM.

Height 2m (but capable of much more without frost).
Origin Native to Brazil.
Conditions Moisture-retentive, well-nourished soil.
Hardiness RHS H2, USDA 8a-12.
Season In tropical homelands, the plant flowers continually. In the UK, flowers are checked by winter frosts. **CM**

EUPHORBIA MARGALIDIANA

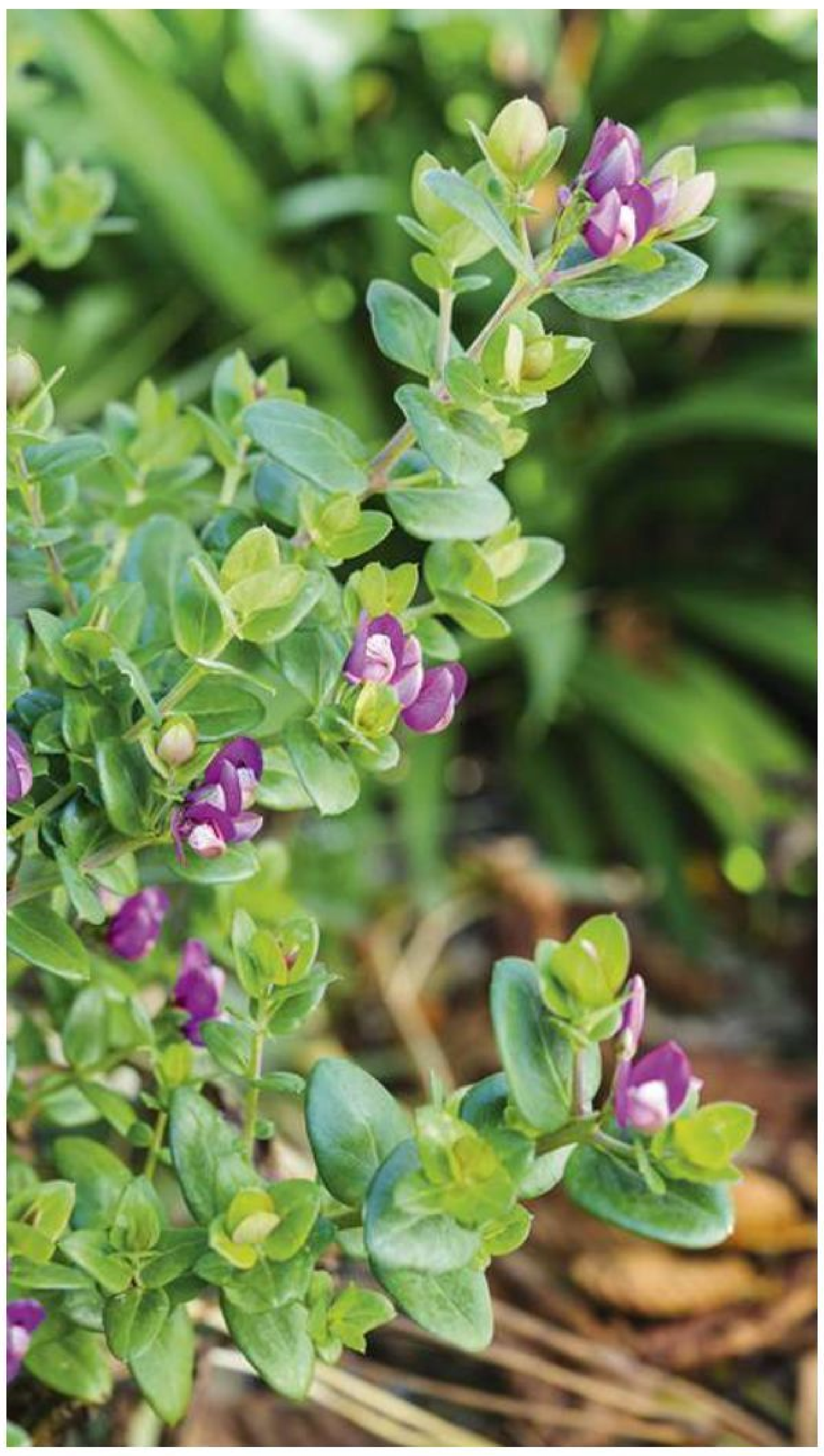
This shrubby spurge performed magnificently in a recent trial of *Euphorbia* at RHS Wisley and flowered almost continuously throughout the year. There was some doubt that this species would be hardy but it survived the duration of the trial (2013-2015). In its native Majorca, it is restricted to limestone cliffs and appears as a critically endangered species on the International Union for Conservation of nature and Natural Resources Red List. Perhaps if more gardeners were to grow this amazing spurge it might be saved from its critical status. AGM.

Height 1.2-1.5m.
Origin Majorca.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season All year round. **MC**

JASON INGRAM

IF MORE PEOPLE GROW THIS AMAZING SPURGE, IT MIGHT BE SAVED FROM CRITICAL STATUS

EUPHORBIA MARGALIDIANA



JASON INGRAM

POLYGALA 'AFRICANA'

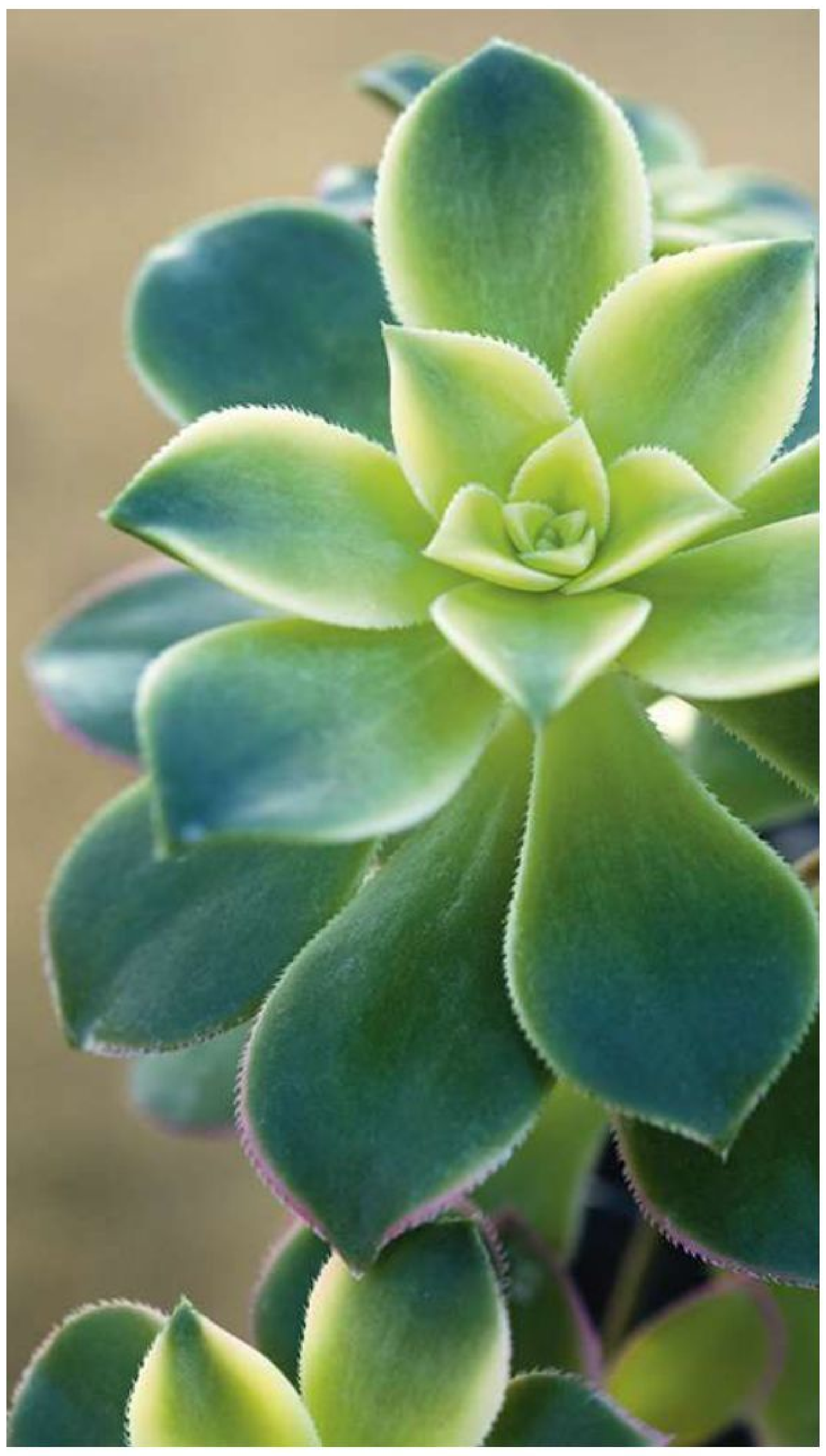
Polygalas are tender evergreen shrubs from South Africa. The best ones make brilliant conservatory plants where they can bloom all year. Outdoors in a sheltered sunny position, perhaps against a wall, they will bloom for six months. A hard winter will see them off, but even one summer of the pretty pea-like flowers is worth it. Each flower has a tiny white beard like the closely related English wildflower, milkwort. *Polygala* 'Africana' has a particularly good compact habit, blue-grey leaves and lots of flowers.

Height 80cm.
Origin South Africa.
Conditions Sun, good drainage and shelter from hard frost.
Hardiness USDA 9b-11.
Season All year round in a conservatory, June to November outdoors. **DW**

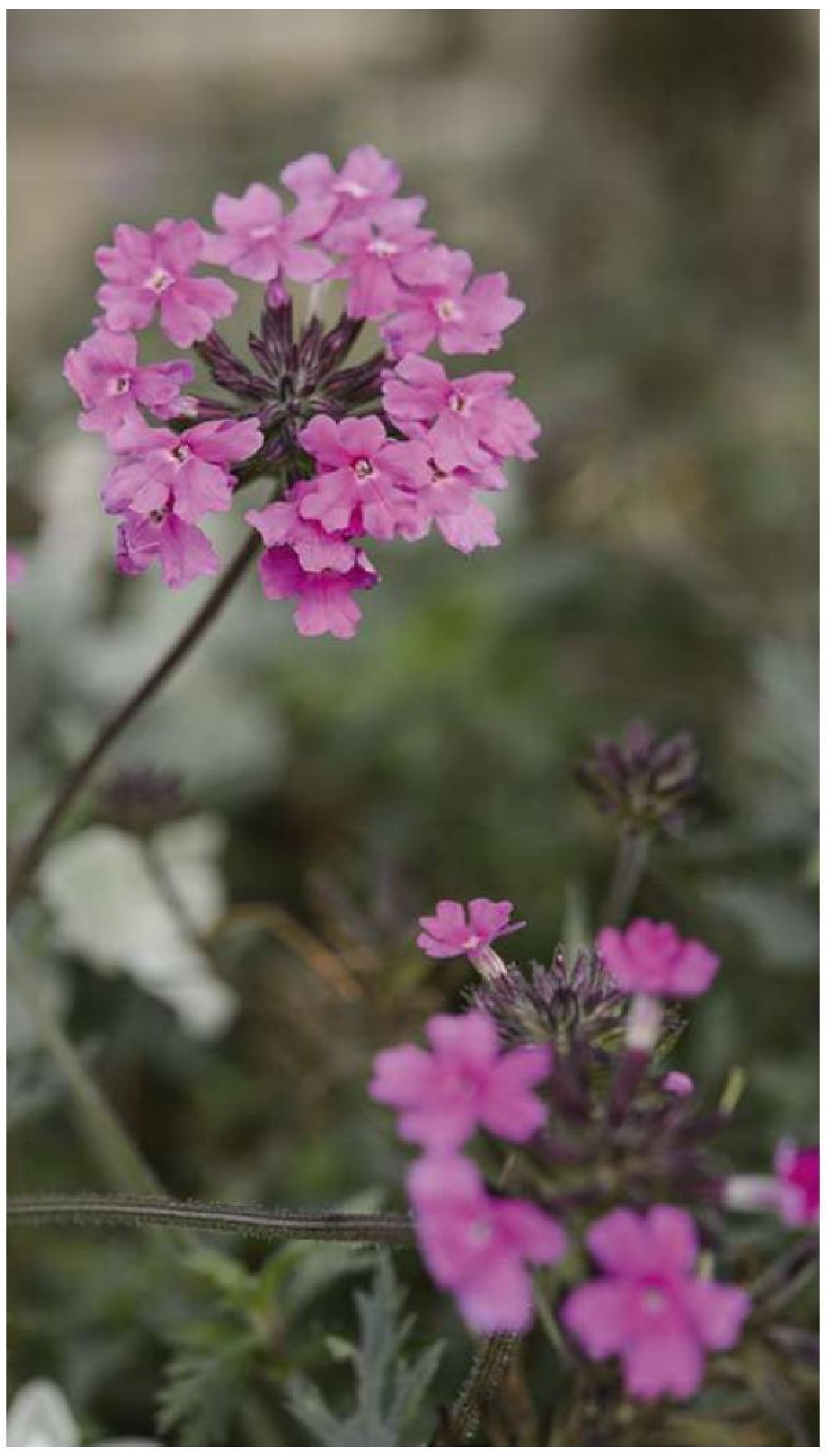
AEONIUM HAWORTHII 'VARIEGATUM'

In winter I like to have a few plants in view on a window ledge or in the greenhouse. The succulents and other tender plants stand outside in the summer and this plant can sometimes be lost among its bigger relatives. Once in the greenhouse, you can appreciate its beautiful cream-and-green rosettes. The mature leaves have a distinctive pink edge. I can't justify the energy required to mollycoddle them in a heated greenhouse, so I keep them dry and wrap them in horticultural fleece when it is very cold. AGM.

Height 20cm.
Origin Canary Islands.
Conditions In a pot with well-drained soil in sun or part shade. Overwinter indoors.
Hardiness RHS H1C.
Season All year round. **JH**



RACHEL WARNE



JASON INGRAM

GLANDULARIA 'SISSINGHURST'

'Sissinghurst' is an older cultivar that has held its own for quite some time, even with the recent influx of new selections. It produces clusters of hot-pink flowers on loose, scrambling plants. The flowers are produced from summer through the autumn and look particularly good when married with silver-greys, such as *Helichrysum petiolare*. It does best in a pot and the flowers are self-cleaning, so no deadheading necessary. It is important to feed them during the growing season with a phosphate fertiliser to keep them flowering. AGM.

Height 20cm.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Well-drained soil in full sun.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 5a-9b.
Season August to October. **MR**

I'M NOT USUALLY A HYDRANGEA LOVER, BUT THIS ONE IS AN IRRESISTIBLE DRAMA QUEEN

HYDRANGEA MACROPHYLLA 'MERVEILLE SANGUINE'

PENSTEMON HARTWEGII 'ALBUS'

Early in my career I attempted to grow as many wild-collected species of penstemon as I could and succeeded in germinating over 100 different species and subspecies. Unfortunately, the high humidity of the British climate caused many to succumb to fungal diseases over winter whereas in their native habitat the air is dry and cold and fungal infections are rare. This bushy penstemon has narrow, pale-green, glossy leaves with creamy buds opening to slender, tubular, white flowers. It is not prone to powdery mildew and is reliable in most weather conditions.

Height 75-90cm.
Origin Mexico.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season July to October. **MC**

JASON INGRAM

JASON INGRAM

HYDRANGEA MACROPHYLLA 'MERVEILLE SANGUINE'

As summer turns to autumn, the leaves of 'Merveille Sanguine' gradually turn purple, setting off the dusky, deep-purple-pink flowers to perfection.
On acid soils the flowers are positively violet. I am not usually a hydrangea lover, but this one is an irresistible drama queen. Hydrangeas like good soil, which does not dry out, and a bit of shade and shelter, but don't give 'Merveille Sanguine' too much shade or the leaves will revert to green. Morning sun is usually best. The name translates perfectly – 'bloody marvellous'.

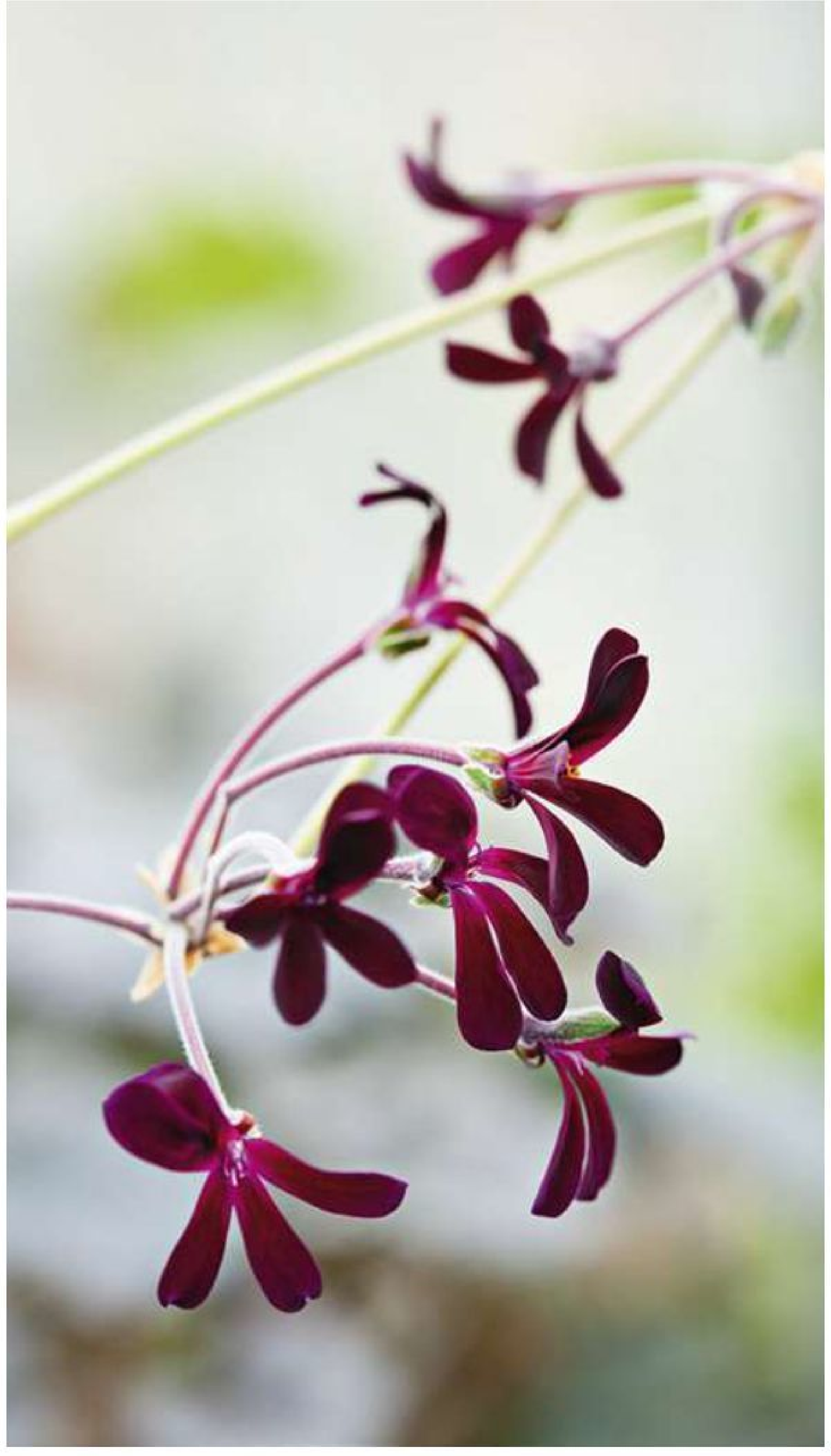
Height 1.5m.
Origin Japan.
Conditions Sun or light shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.
Season July to November. **DW**

HESPERANTHA COCCINEA F. ALBA

The species (formerly *Schizostylis coccinea*) has bright-red, bowl-shaped flowers that look as if they belong in a midsummer border. This form has smaller flowers with narrow petals that create a star-like effect and feel much more at home in the waning weeks of the year. It can be a temperamental plant, particularly in dry soils. To thrive it needs far more moisture than its South African origins might suggest, so mulch regularly with moisture-retaining compost.
In mild winters a few tenacious flowers hang on until December, and one year we even had flowers at Christmas.

Height 30cm.
Origin South Africa.
Conditions Rich, moist soil in full sun.
Hardiness USDA 6a-9b.
Season September to November. **JH**

RACHEL WARNE



RACHEL WARNE

PELARGONIUM SIDOIDES

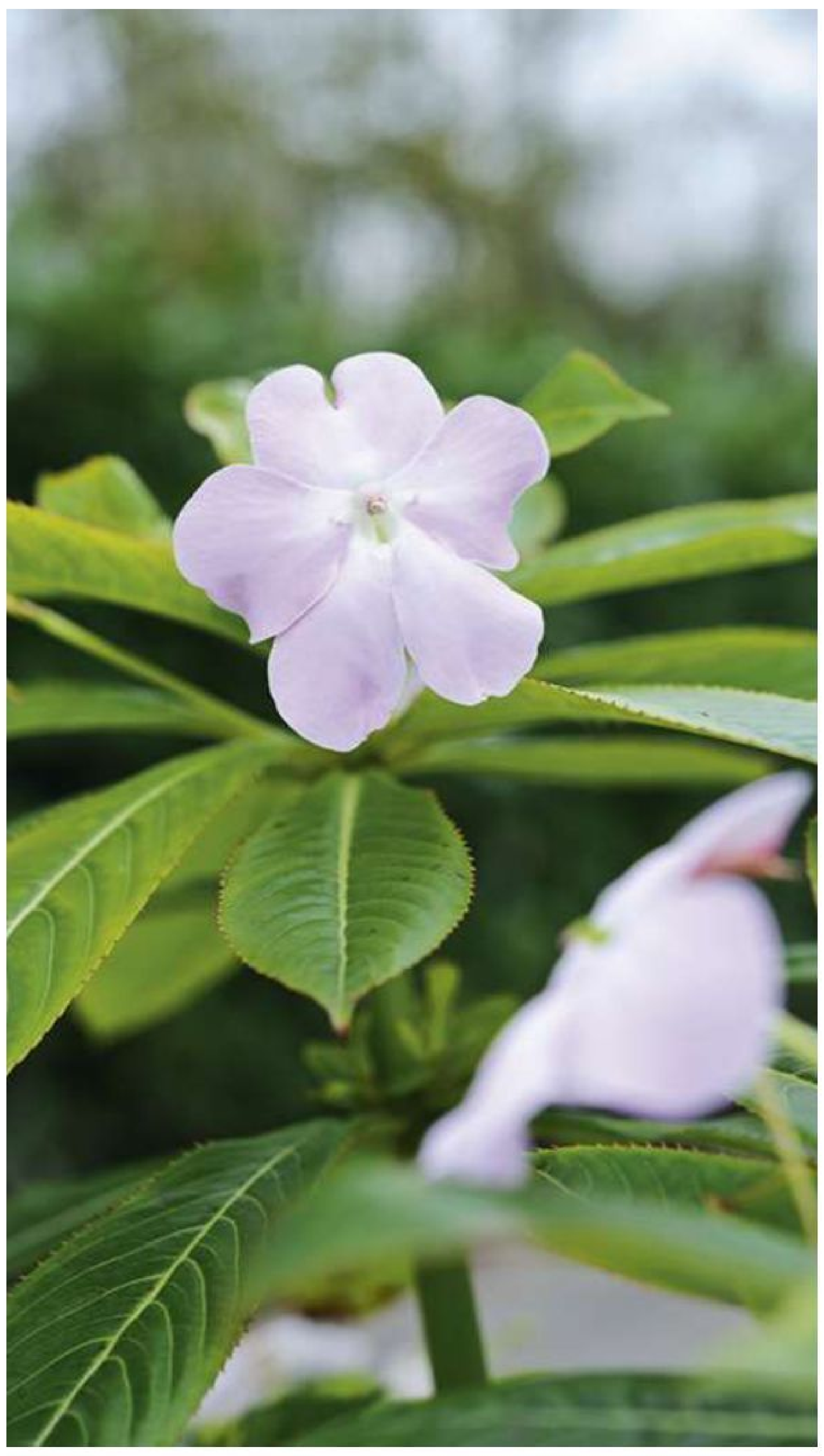
We cut back most of our pelargoniums in the autumn in order to give the plant a rest and to make space in the greenhouse. Each year we leave a few to flower over Christmas, and this is always one of them. The silvery-grey foliage and dark-purple flowers make an elegant combination. Cuttings we took six months ago are now flowering and will be brought into the house over Christmas. In its native South Africa the plant is used as a remedy for coughs and colds. It is so effective that it has been taken up by high street chemists. AGM.

Height 25cm.
Origin South Africa.
Conditions Grow in a well-lit place indoors, in well-drained, loam-based compost.
Hardiness RHS H1C, USDA 9a-11.
Season June to December. **JH**

IMPATIENS SODENII

Though related, this plant has little in common with the demure busy lizzie of window boxes. As a frost-tender shrub, we selected it to extend the floral display in a shady spring garden. Young plants, bedded out in May, grew to around 70cm tall. A plethora of shell-pink, spurred flowers, roughly 5cm across, gave continuous display through summer and well into autumn, ceasing only when sharp frosts took their toll. Late-summer cuttings can be overwintered with protection. AGM.

Height Commonly 70cm, but can reach over 1.5m in tropical climates.
Origin Tropical east African Highlands.
Conditions Moisture-retentive garden loam.
Hardiness RHS H1C, USDA 9b-11.
Season August to December, depending on frosts. **CM**



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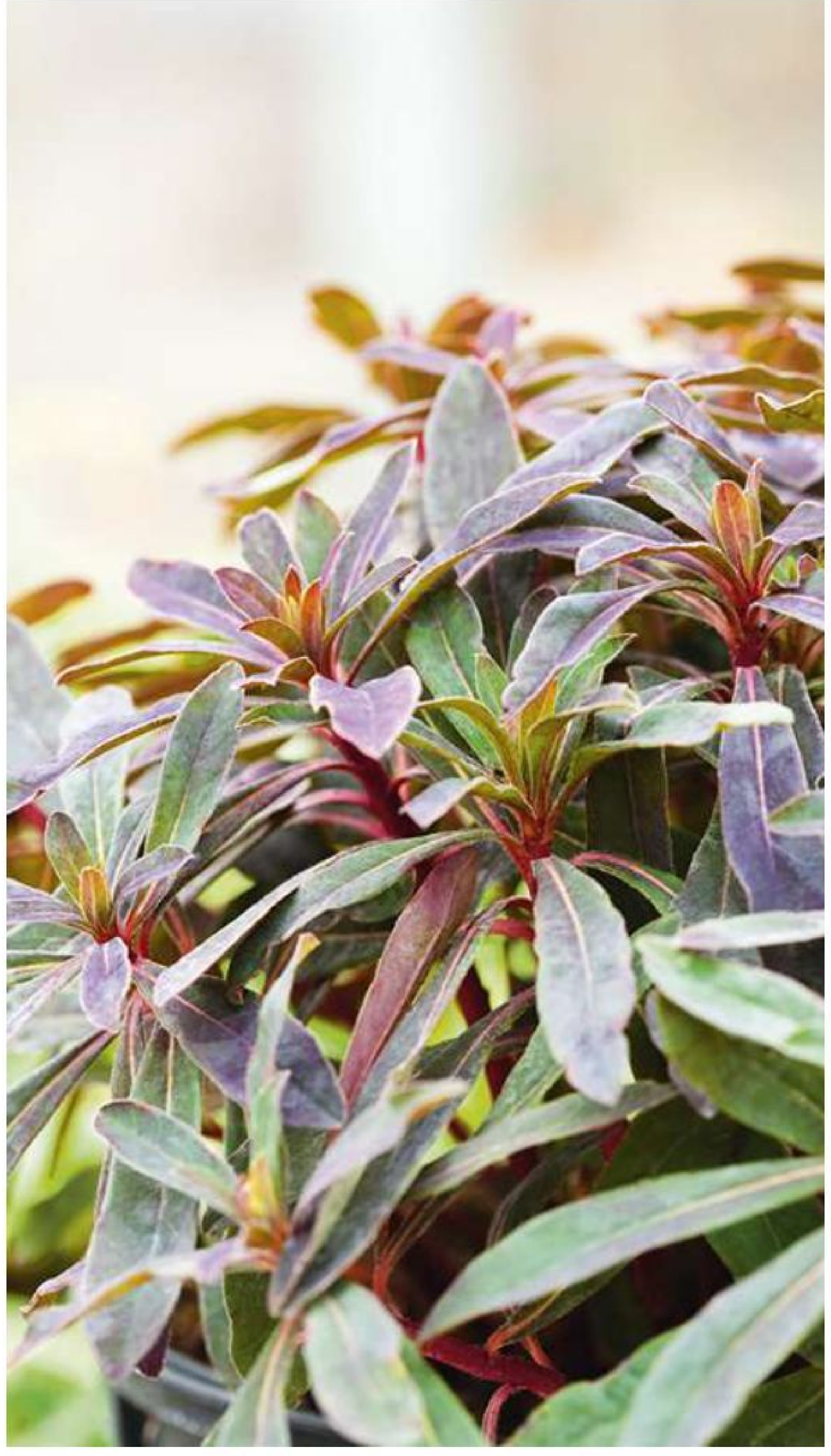


RACHEL WARNE

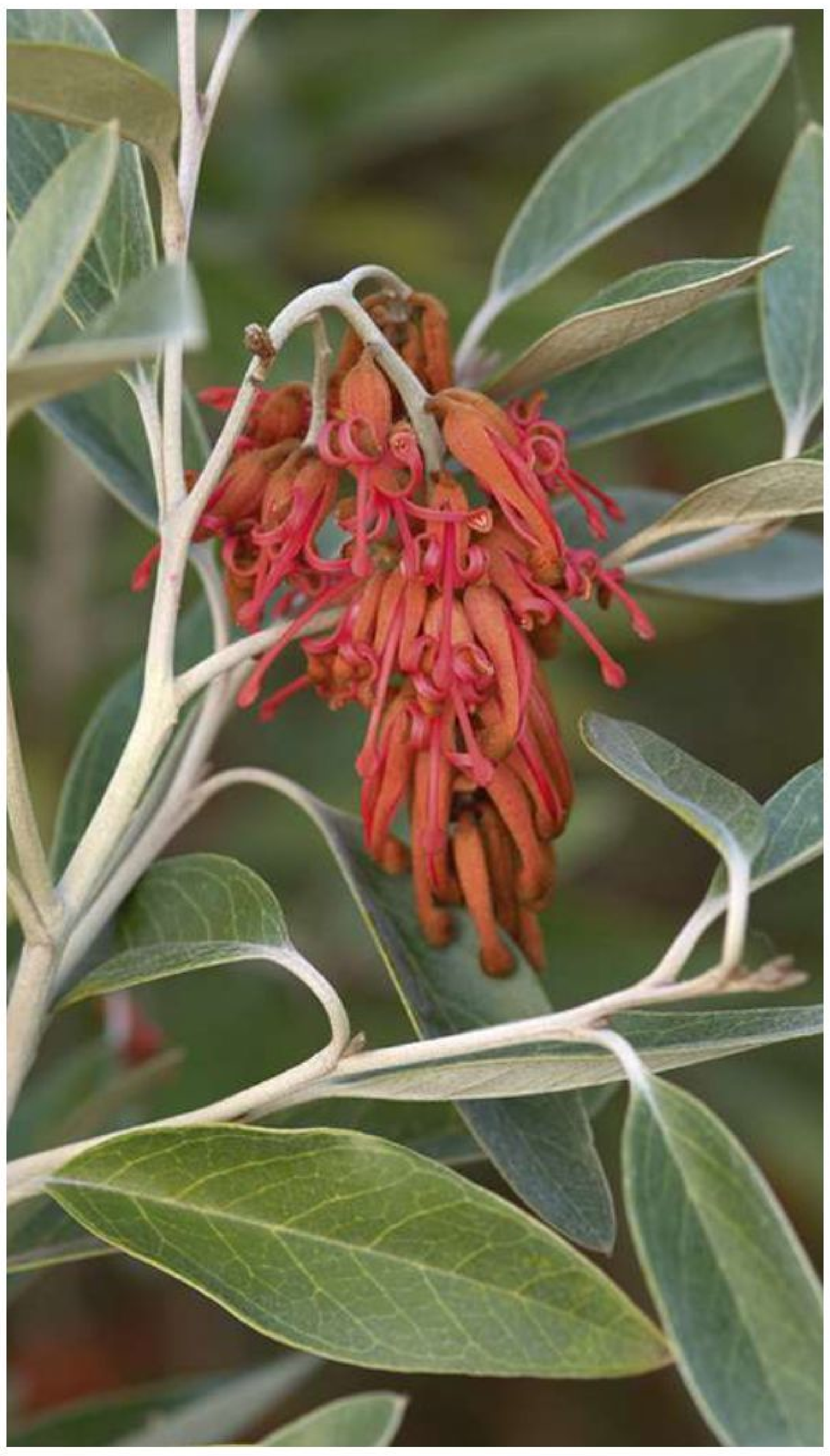
EUPHORBIA AMYGDALOIDES ‘PURPUREA’

One winter, when snow lay on the ground for weeks, parts of the garden were punctuated by mounds of purple foliage from this tough little euphorbia. The colour of the leaves changes dramatically with the seasons and during cold spells in midwinter it is deep purple. As the temperature rises in spring, the foliage turns greener and bright, acid-green bracts emerge. The plant has a reputation for self-seeding and running about. It does, but it can be easily controlled.

Height 50cm.
Origin The species is native to Britain as well as much of Europe east to Iran.
Conditions Poor dry soil in full sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-10b.
Season All year round. **JH**

THE UBIQUITY OF THIS WINTER CLIMBER DOESN'T LESSEN ITS CHARM

JASMINUM NUDIFLORUM



TORIE CHUGG

GREVILLEA VICTORIAE

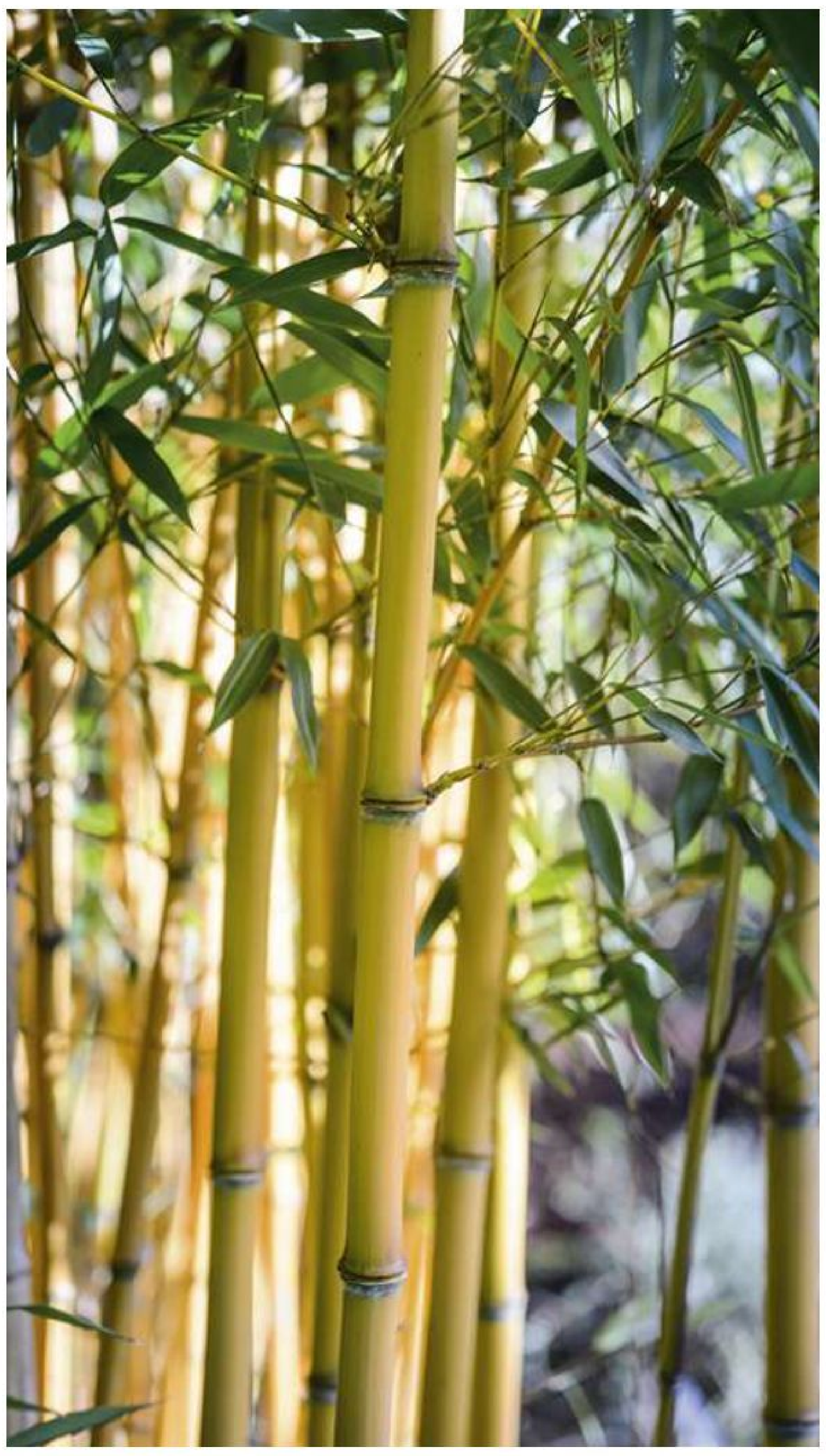
Australian plants tend to die in British gardens from the wet and, principally, the cold. Grevilleas (at least those commonly grown here) seem tougher than expected and this one survived -20°C last winter. It forms orange-red buds in August, which persist without opening until November and then (depending on the weather) continue to open into early spring. The foliage is broad and grey-green and complements the flowers wonderfully. Red flowers cheer up the winter no end.

Height 1.5m.
Origin Mountainous parts of Victoria and southern New South Wales, Australia.
Conditions Sunny, well-drained sites. Avoid very limey soils. Plant late autumn and winter flowers where they'll be seen.
Hardiness USDA 8a-10b.
Season September to February, peaking in November. **BB**

PHYLLOSTACHYS AUREOSULCATA F. *AUREOCAULIS*

This golden-caned, smooth-sheathed bamboo makes a wonderful specimen, clumping up vigorously with ever-thicker canes as the plant matures and the underground rhizomes increase. The canes have deep grooves on the sides where the drooping leaves emerge and a thicket of this bamboo can provide an effective screen in a relatively short period. With the play of light through the canes, it is easy to see how wildlife can be effectively camouflaged when hunting in the wild.

Height 8m plus.
Origin China.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil in sun or partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-10b.
Season All year round. **MC**



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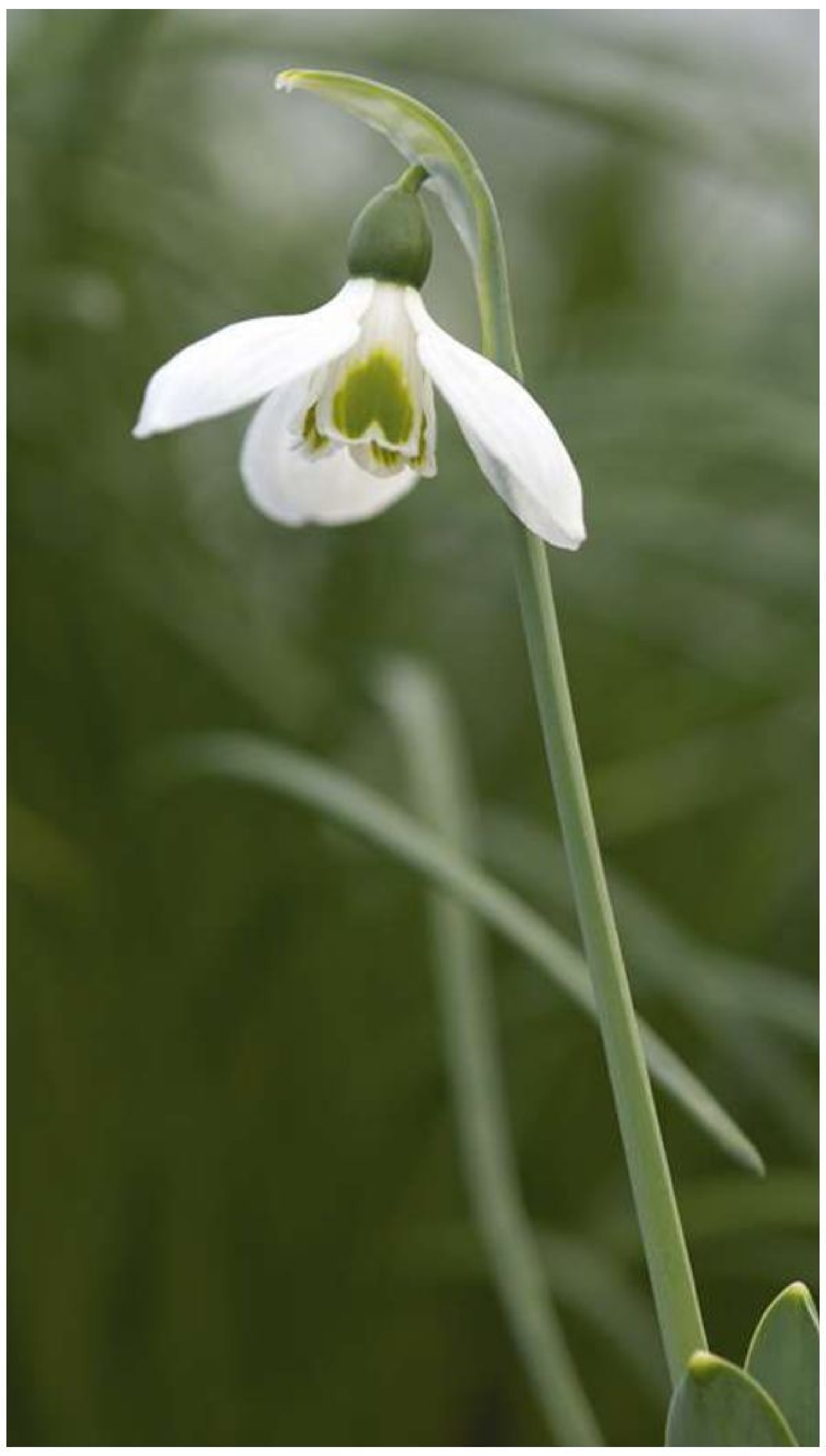


TORIE CHUGG

GALANTHUS ELWESII VAR. *MONOSTICTUS* HIEMALIS GROUP

Snowdrops are effective, cheering and important. Ones that have better foliage, bigger flowers or extend the season are worth seeking out. This extends the season at the beginning (when there are fewer attractions) by starting to bloom in November (sometimes October or December). The blooms last until the rest of your snowdrops start to open. It's tough, so will survive almost anywhere if it can get some winter sun. I plant it by the path among (dormant) agapanthus.

Height 12cm.
Origin Turkey.
Conditions Heavier soils seem to suit them better than light sandy ones.
Hardiness USDA 5a-10a.
Season November to January. **BB**

TORIE CHUGG

JASMINUM NUDIFLORUM

We all know this plant, but its ubiquity doesn't lessen its charm. Can you imagine the wonder it induced when it first appeared in the middle of the 19th century? Its conspicuous, long, dark-green stems make a wonderful background for the clear, yellow, star-shaped flowers, which can be very fragrant. It's at its best in November. Don't forget to give it a haircut every spring with shears and you'll get the shapeliest winter effect. AGM.

Height 3m.
Origin China.
Conditions Up walls or down banks.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.
Season Late October to December with smatterings of flower into January. **BB**

THE PANICLES ARE SO FULL OF RED BERRIES THAT THE BRANCHES BEND OVER

NANDINA DOMESTICA 'RICHMOND'

ILEX CORNUTA X PERNYI

Colourful berries are a welcome sight during the winter months and this attractive, small-leaved holly produces an abundant crop of red berries clustered along the branches. There are more than 400 species of holly, and hybridisers have made many interspecific crosses resulting in some excellent hybrids. This cross is between two Asian species and is a female cultivar so it produces fruit providing a welcome source of nutrition for birds and small mammals. Hollies are unpalatable to deer and make a good, evergreen, stock-proof hedge.

Height 4-6m.
Origin Central and western China, hybrid.
Conditions Moisture-retentive soil with humus in sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.
Season Autumn to spring. **MC**

JASON INGRAM

JASON INGRAM

NARCISSUS PAPYRACEUS

Paperwhite narcissi are among the easiest bulbs to force for indoor Christmas displays. The key is to ensure that they have at least a few weeks in a cold frame to establish a good, healthy root system before trying to force them. The tazetta-blooms are glistening white, held in loose clusters. The flowers produce a very powerful scent – so powerful, in fact, that it can become cloying – so they are best used in a large room or porch. Stake them with a split cane and tie in the stems and leaves with raffia – one at a lower tier to take in the foliage, and then again just below the flowers.

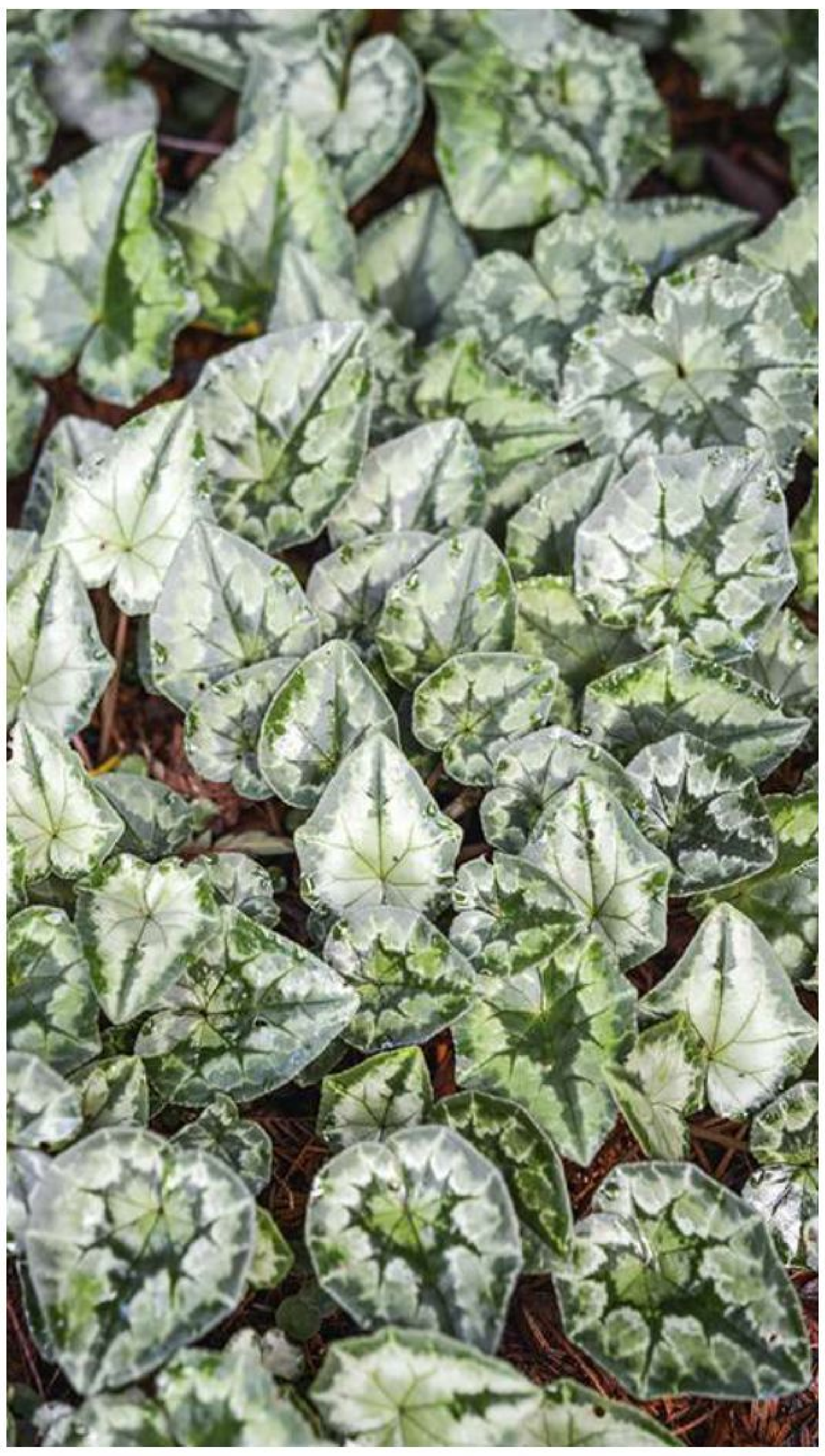
Height 40cm.
Origin Western Europe and western and northern Africa.
Conditions Any soil.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 4a-8b.
Season December to February. **MR**

ABELIA X GRANDIFLORA 'LAKE MAGGIORE'

A glorious, late-summer, flowering shrub, smothered in flowers in August, September and October. The white flowers are so numerous they weigh the branches down. By November the flowers have fallen but the red bracts remain, keeping the show going almost until Christmas. It has small, glossy, more-or-less evergreen leaves and reddish stems. Allowed to grow freely, it will become a large, gracefully arching mound, but I cut out all the new long stems to keep it more compact and floriferous. AGM.

Height 3m.
Origin Bred in Italy in 1886 from two Chinese species.
Conditions Sun, shelter.
Hardiness USDA 5a-9b.
Season July to November. **DW**

JASON INGRAM



JASON INGRAM

CYCLAMEN HEDERIFOLIUM

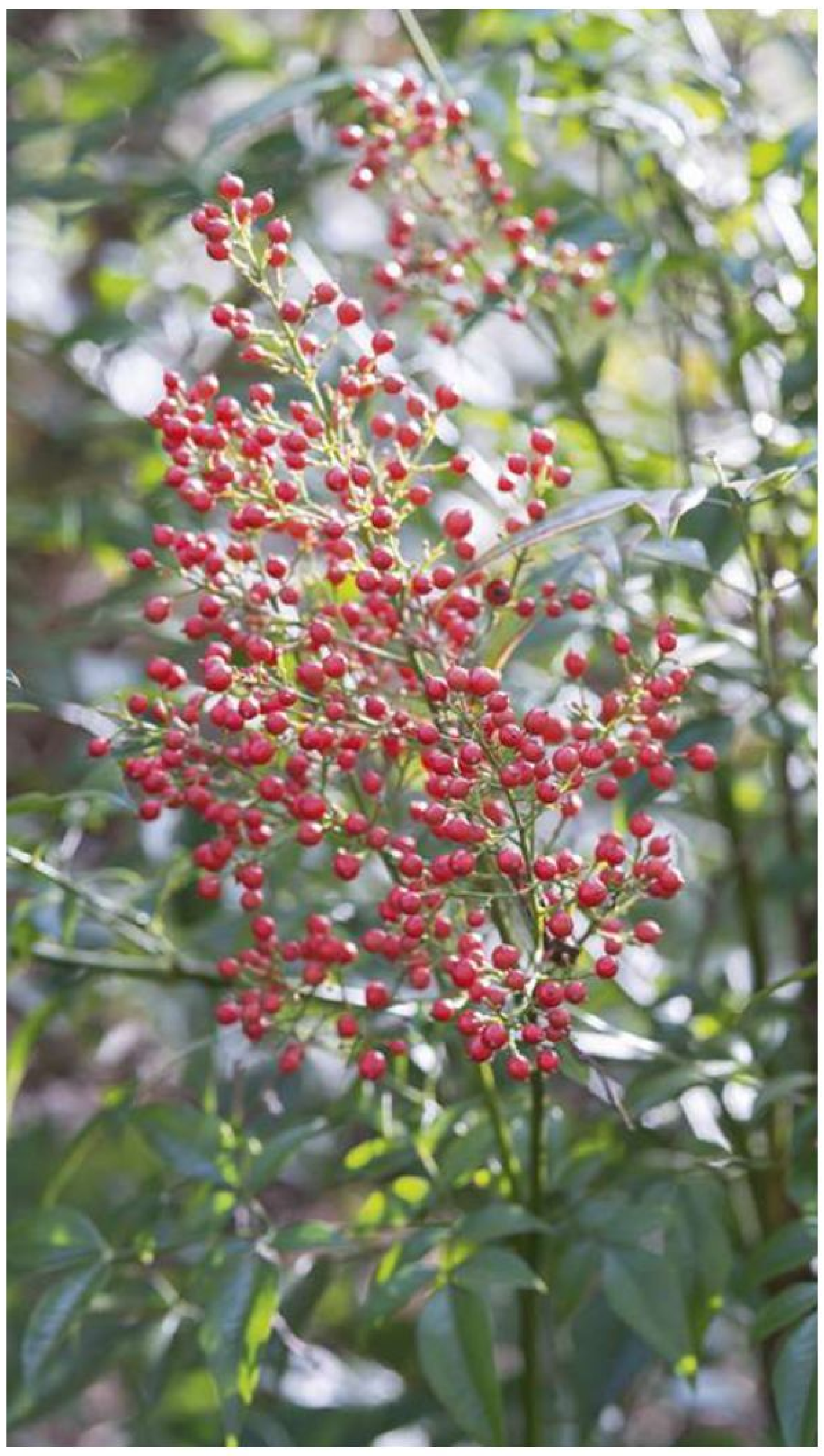
In late summer and early autumn flowers emerge on short stems from rounded flattened corms. These are white, pink, deep-pink or almost-purple, butterfly-like blooms, which unfurl with reflexed petals darker at the base where they attach to a circular disc. A few weeks later the leaves appear, often with beautiful silver and green markings that persist long after the flowers have finished. Propagation is by seed. Seeds are enclosed in round, brown seedheads on tightly coiled stems, dispersed by ants that love the fatty white substance attached to the seed. AGM.

Height 10cm.
Origin Southern France, Greece, Turkey.
Conditions Humus-rich, well-drained soil in dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.
Season Late summer to spring. **MC**

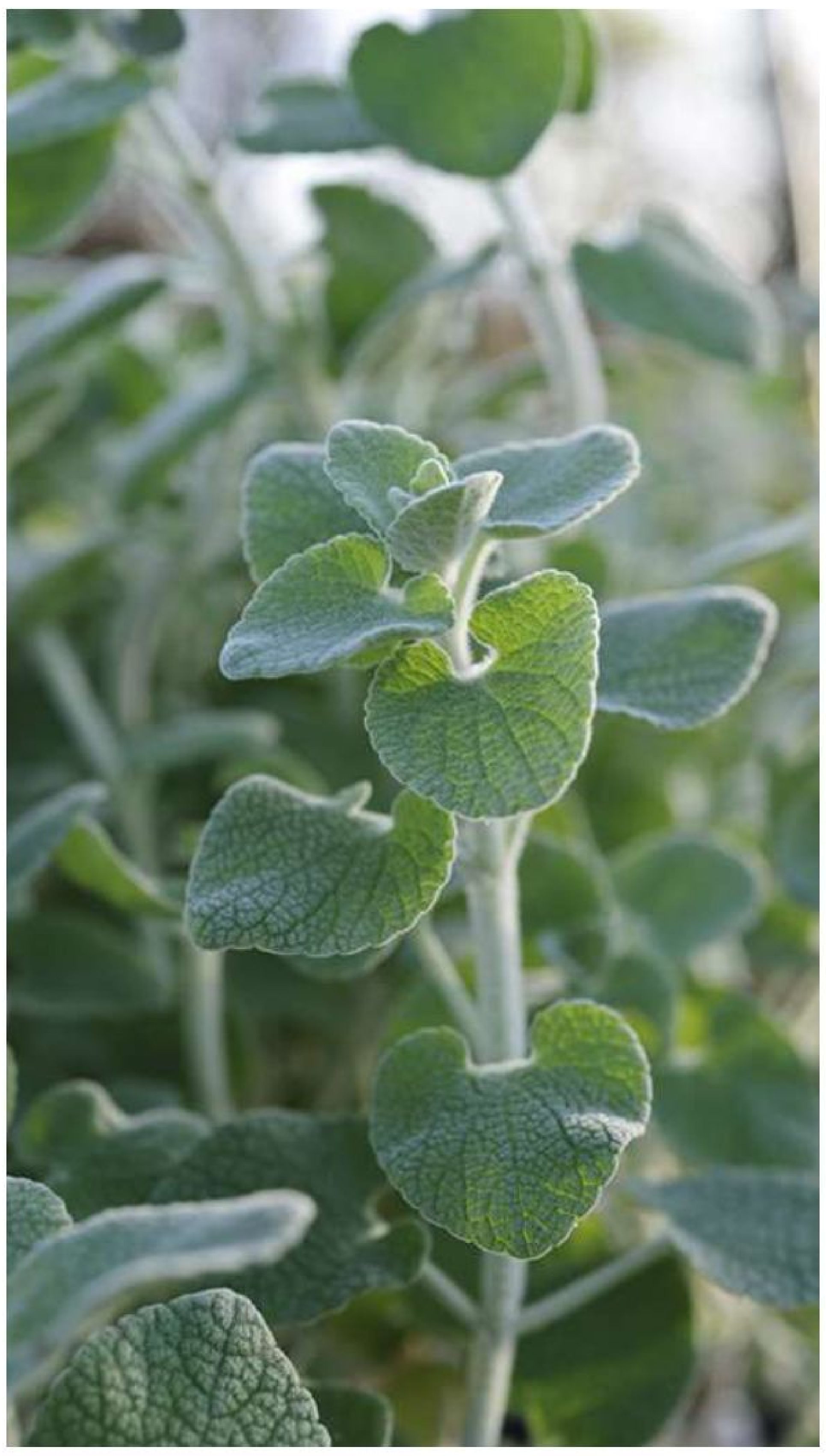
NANDINA DOMESTICA 'RICHMOND'

It's hard to believe that this evergreen shrub is from the *Berberis* genus – but without the spines. The small flowers, with yellow anthers, are easily overlooked in early summer. Until then you are simply satisfied with the leathery, bluish-green leaves, which are coppery red when young. But in autumn this shrub becomes spectacular with bright-red leaves and panicles so full of red berries that the branches bend over. This really is one of the best fruited shrubs I know, and it even grows in heavy shade. AGM.

Height 2m.
Origin Japan, China, Korea and northern India.
Conditions Humus-rich soil in sun or full shade.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Season October to winter. **HK**



MAAYEK DE RIDDER



JASON INGRAM

BALLOTA PSEUDODICTAMNUS

Few grey-leaved plants maintain their elegance throughout winter. *Ballota* is an exception, and valuable for this reason; grey-green foliage has a soft, downy covering that catches the light and gives a silvery sheen. Small, rounded, alternate leaves ascend stems that resemble silver pipe cleaners, forming attractive loose clumps. The effect is to bring a pool of illumination, and the illusion of warmth to wintery borders. Plants should be reshaped each spring to maintain good form. AGM.

Height 40cm.
Origin Dry habitats of the Mediterranean into Asia.
Conditions Free-draining, warmer soils.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 8a-10a.
Season Evergreen foliage, flowers in June. **CM**

MAAYKE DE RIDDER

MALUS X ROBUSTA 'RED SENTINEL'

At our nursery we grow 6,000 different plants but this crab apple is especially worthwhile. It's the most widely known crab and deserves its ubiquity for its year-long interest. In April, light-pink buds emerge and are followed by blossom a few days later. These become white as the flowers open, completely smothering this small tree. By summer, the shining, deep-green leaves have taken over, turning a golden yellow in autumn. Then it's the small fruits that develop, becoming dark red and shiny. The fruits remain on the branches throughout winter and can be picked for decorations around Christmas. AGM.

Height 6m.
Origin Cultivar selected from a hybrid in Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum.
Conditions Fertile soil in sun or partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8a.
Season October to December. **HK**

IN WINTER THE STEMS OF THIS DOGWOOD SUPPLY COLOUR IN SPADES

CORNUS ALBA 'SIBIRICA'

JASON INGRAM

PICEA ORIENTALIS

The oriental spruce is a broadly conical tree with very smart, densely needled twigs that look like fat pipe cleaners. The branches have an ascending habit with weeping laterals that look particularly festive when covered in purplish, slim, hanging cones. Both the cones and branches are particularly good for making Christmas decorations. It is best grown as a specimen tree where the lovely architecture can be enjoyed unobscured by competition, provided it is not too exposed. Plant in any soil that is not too thin, chalky, or susceptible to long periods of drought. AGM.

Height 12m.
Origin Northern Turkey, Caucasus.
Conditions Any soil.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.
Season All year round. **MR**

CORNUS ALBA 'SIBIRICA'

A glimpse of colour other than the buffs and browns of skeletal herbaceous foliage is a welcome sight during the winter months and the stems of this dogwood supply it in spades. Vibrant, slender, fiery-red stems glow in wintry sunlight, providing a striking focal point. To achieve the best display, the woody stems should be pruned hard back to a few inches above ground in spring every year, after which a thicket of strong, whippy stems will grow during the summer to provide the magical winter fireworks once the leaves have fallen. AGM.

Height 3m.
Origin Siberia to Manchuria, North Korea.
Conditions Most soils in sun or shade – stem colour not so good in shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.
Season Stems late autumn to spring. **MC**

JASON INGRAM

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CAMELLIA X *VERNALIS* 'YULETIDE'

This hybrid between *C. japonica* and *C. sasanqua* arose by chance in a Californian nursery. It is a welcome presence in winter, making a bushy, evergreen shrub covered in polished foliage and brilliant-red flowers, each with a golden central boss. Plant in a sheltered position that receives some sun during the summer months to promote flowering. It does well in a pot, fed with a good camellia fertiliser. It can suffer in the coldest gardens, but will make a good plant for city gardens as long as the soil is lime-free.

Height 2.5m.
Origin Garden origin, hybrid.
Conditions Any good acidic soil in some sun.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 7a-10b.
Season November to January. **MR**

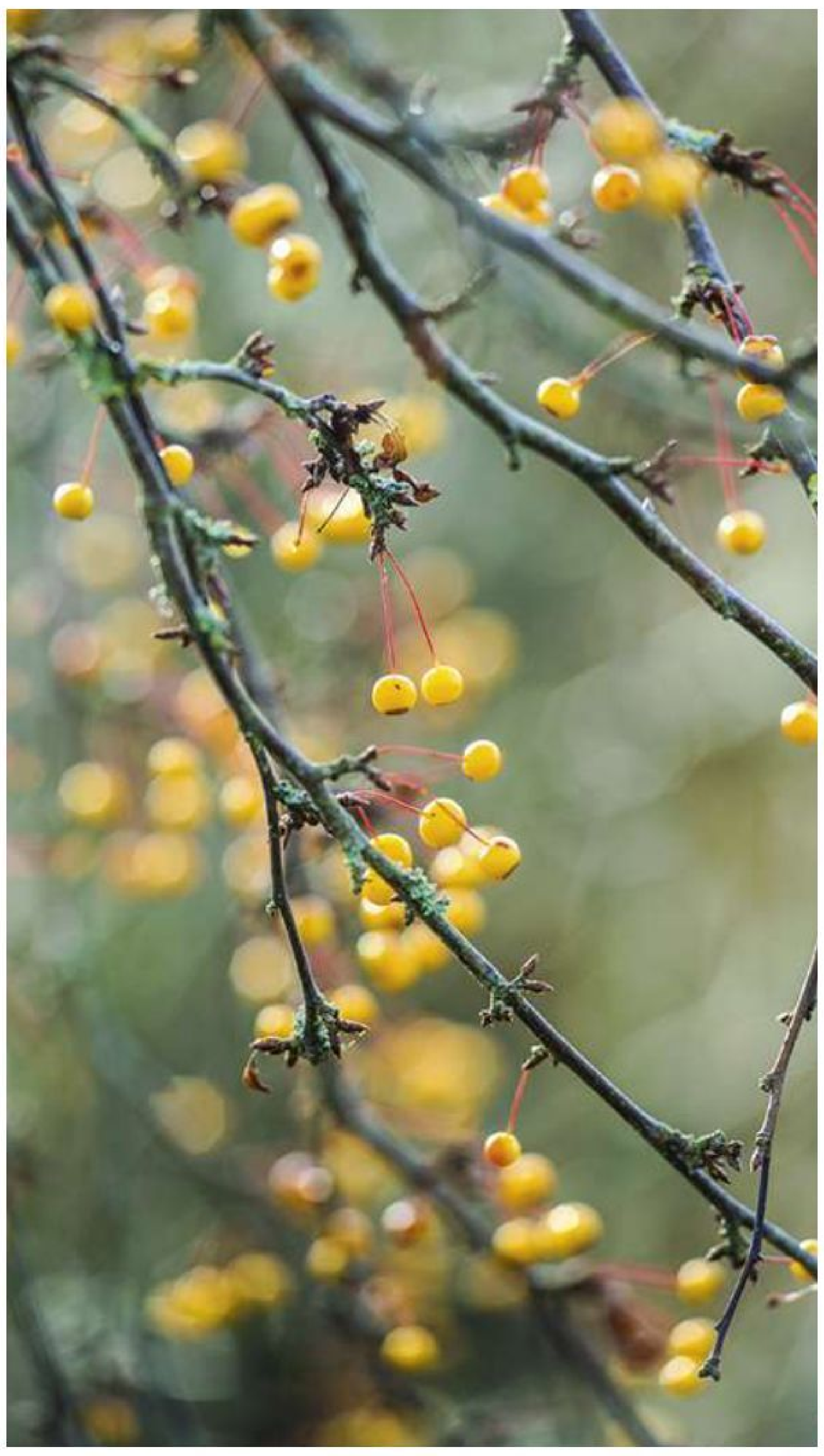
TINY, YELLOW CRAB APPLES, EACH THE SIZE OF A PEA, ARE MUCH LOVED BY BIRDS

MALUS TRANSITORIA

MALUS TRANSITORIA

A graceful, spreading tree that has such copious amounts of fine, white, fragrant blossom in spring – no more transitory than any other crab apple – that it looks as if a white cloud had alighted in the garden. Known as the cut-leaf crab apple, it makes a tracery of small leaves all summer that cast a delicate shade. The leaves turn bright yellow in autumn before they fall to the ground, revealing myriad tiny, round, yellow crab apples, each the size of a pea. Too small to be worth picking for jelly, but very decorative and much loved by birds. AGM.

Height 4-8m.
Origin China.
Conditions Sun or light shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.
Season May for flowers; October to November for fruits. **DW**



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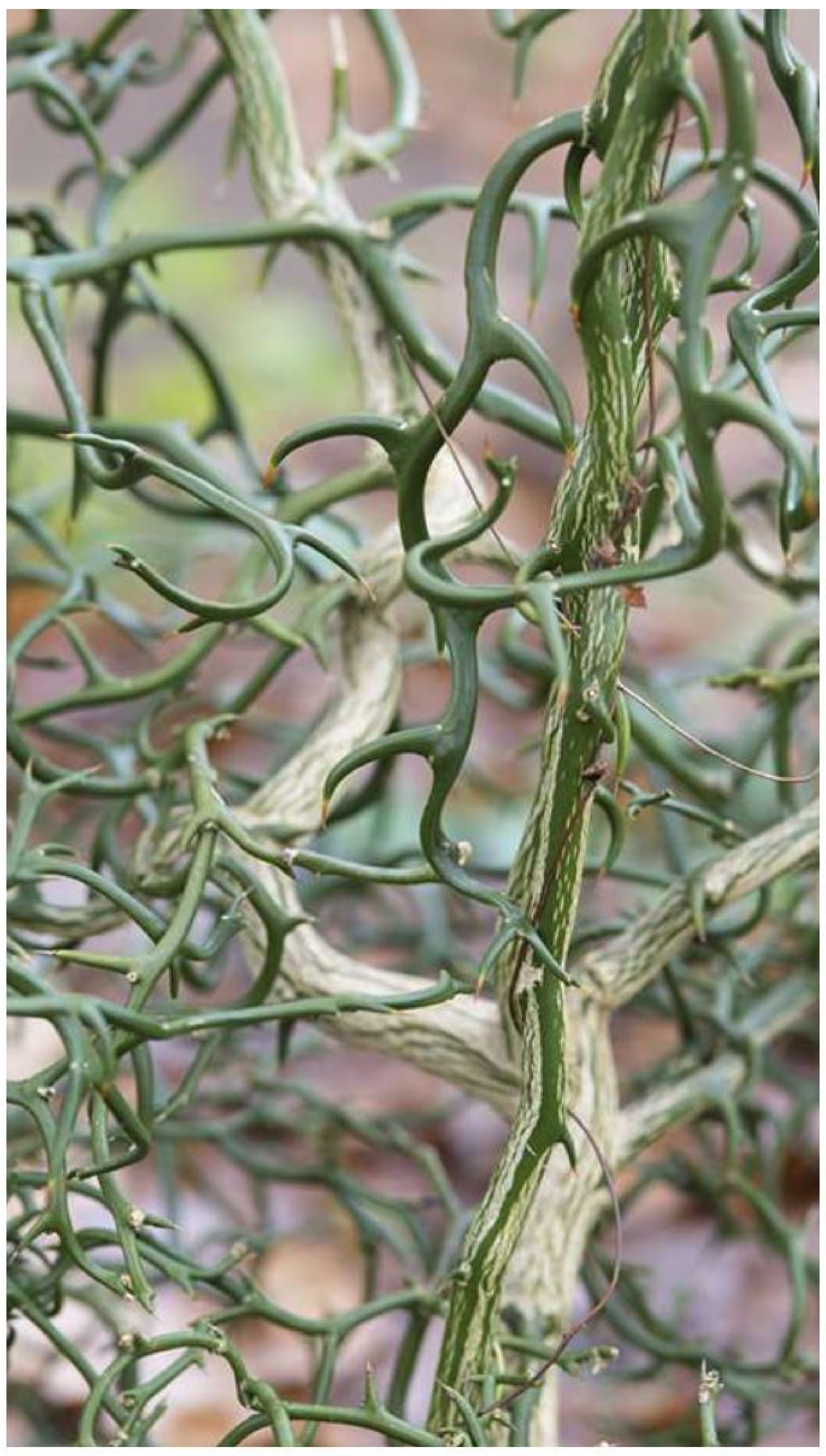


MAAYKE DE RIDDER

CITRUS TRIFOLIATA 'FLYING DRAGON'

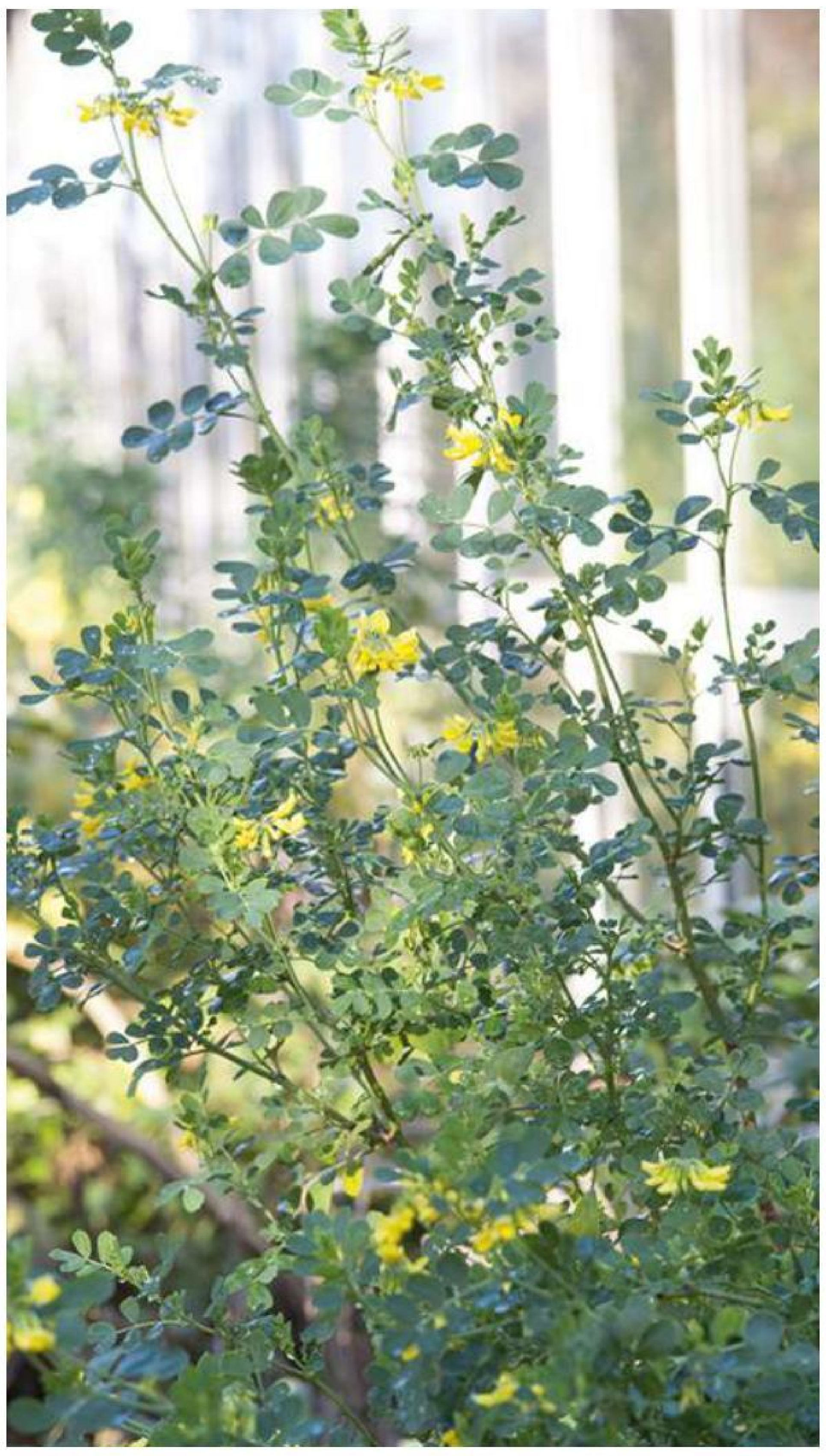
This member of the citrus family is also called Japanese bitter orange – and indeed the yellow fruits are sour and inedible. They do, however, smell lovely; put a few in a bowl in the kitchen and the whole place fills with a sweet perfume. I have had this curious, contorted form since it was a young plant and haven't had any fruits yet, but I'm told they generally remain hanging between the twisted stems into winter. Here it is completely hardy, withstanding -18°C. And I haven't even mentioned the fragrant white flowers in spring…

Height 2.5m.
Origin North China, Korea.
Conditions Well-drained soil, tending towards acidic, in sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 6a-10b.
Season Fruit October to December. **HK**

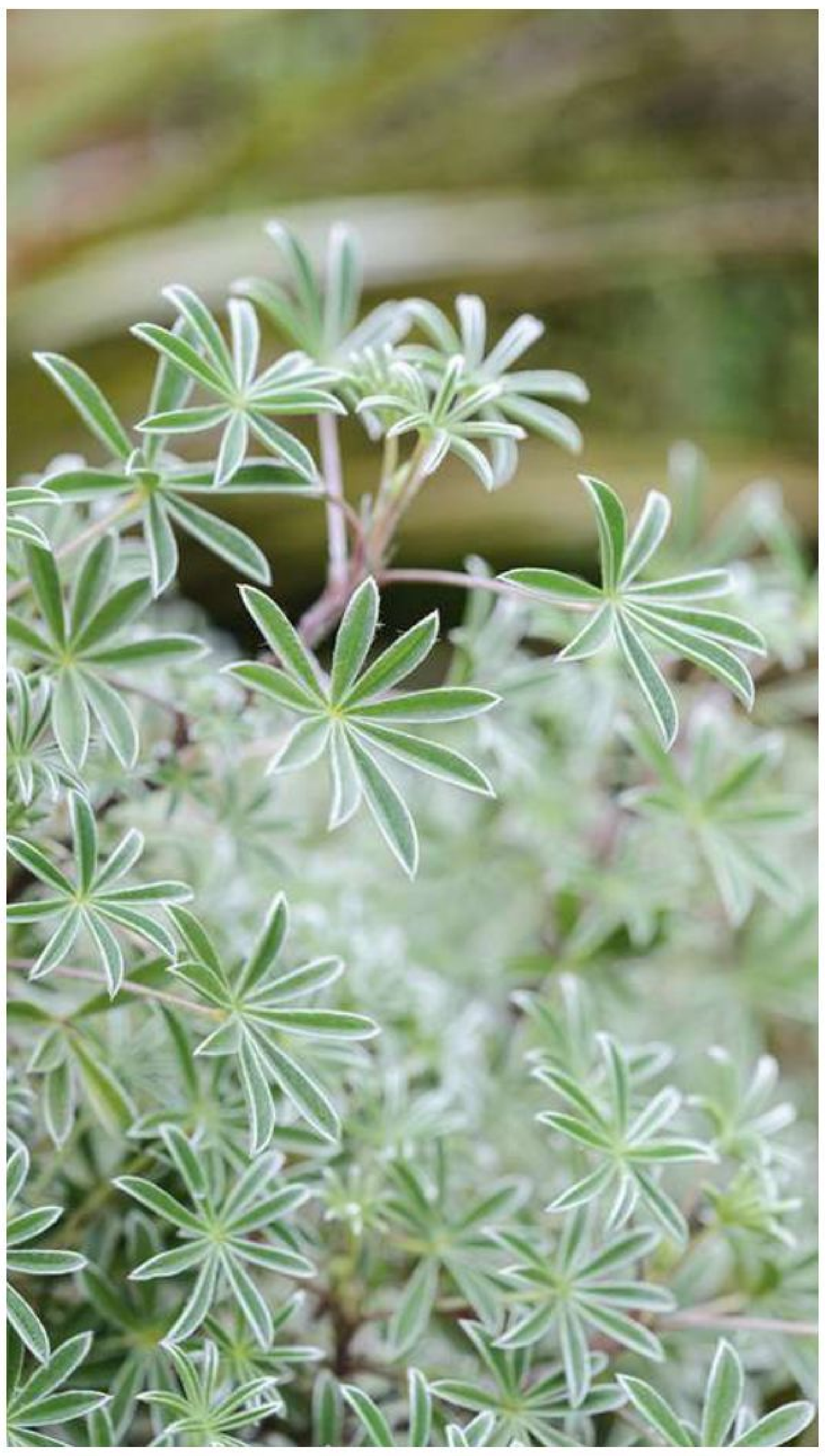
CORONILLA VALENTINA SUBSP. *GLAUCA*

It was nurseryman Bob Brown who told me these vetch-like Mediterranean shrubs were so useful. I'd assumed they weren't hardy, but on our south-facing wall, in our poor, sandy soil, it is the star of winter. From November it produces clusters of pea-like flowers in golden yellow. In a mild winter it keeps on flowering, often through to May. In a very cold winter, the bluish-grey evergreen leaves fall off, and the spidery twigs die down, but it always re-sprouts. Look out for the cultivar 'Citrina' with lemon-yellow flowers. AGM.

Height 90cm.
Origin Mediterranean.
Conditions Well-drained soil in a sheltered position in sun.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 8a-10b.
Season Summer to late autumn. **HK**



MAAYKE DE RIDDER



JASON INGRAM

LUPINUS CHAMISSONIS

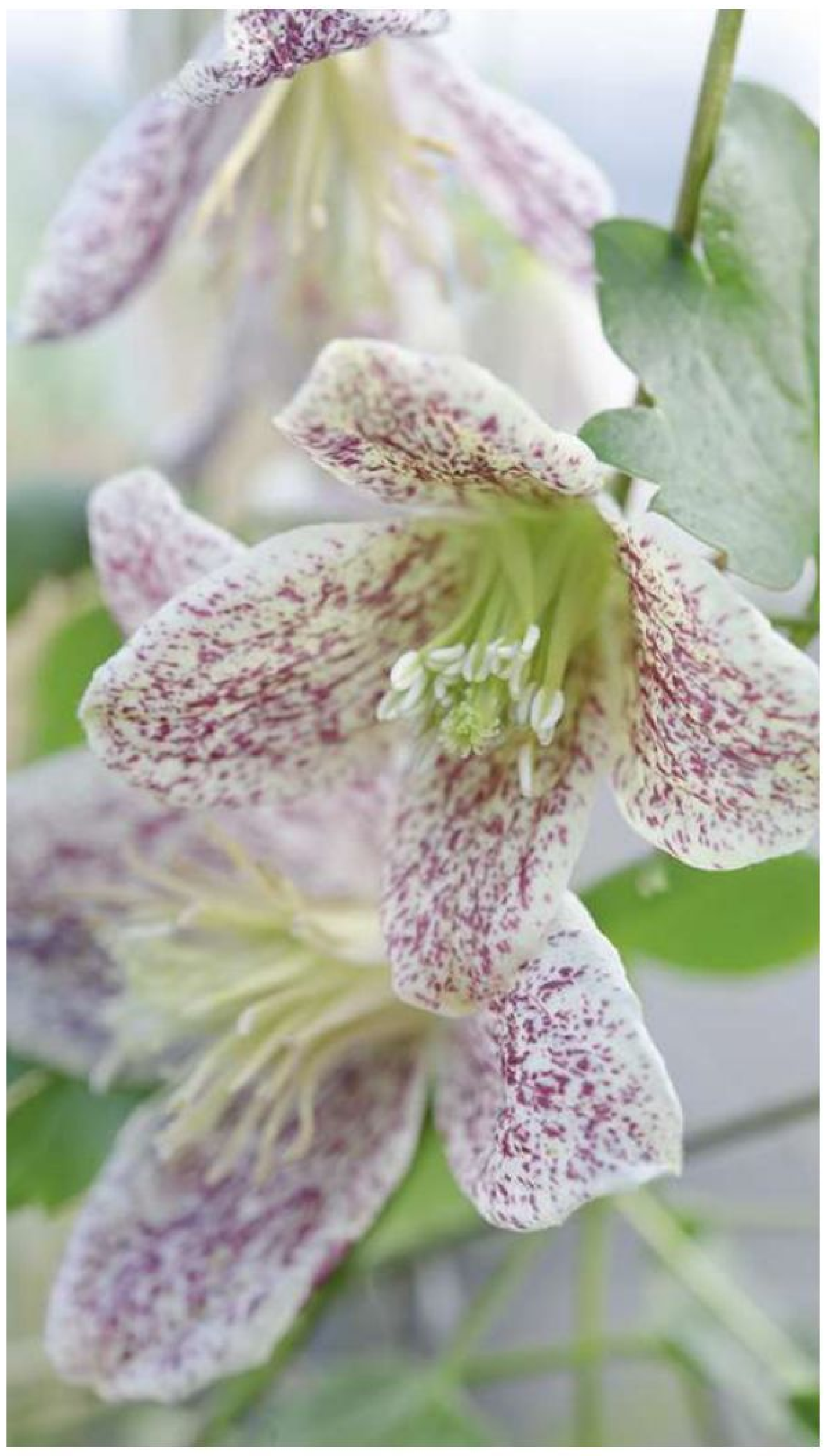
This dwarf evergreen shrub is generally hardy – unless we get a really bad winter. It does, however, need sun and perfect drainage and only lives for four to five years. Fortunately, it is extremely easy to grow from seeds or cuttings. It has fine, silver leaves, which are so beautiful I would almost be happy to grow it solely as a foliage plant. It is wonderful after rain, with each leaf holding a single drop of water like a glittering drop of mercury. But then in June it throws up short, fat spikes of blue-purple lupin flowers making itself utterly irresistible.

Height 30-70cm.
Origin California.
Conditions Sun in soil with good drainage.
Hardiness USDA 8a-10b.
Season All year round. **DW**

CLEMATIS CIRRHOSA VAR. *PURPURASCENS* 'FRECKLES'

This clematis cultivar has a first flush of blooms in November, but continues flowering in all the winter months. It is vigorous and completely evergreen in a warm spot and, although it likes a warm wall, it will be happy, though less floriferous, in shade. Turn the pendent cream blooms upside down to reveal the maroon speckling within. AGM.

Height 1.8m.
Conditions Moist but well-drained soil.
Origin The species is a native of southern Europe and the Mediterranean region, including the Balearic Islands.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.
Season Flowers through the winter into spring; fluffy, silky seedheads in autumn; leaves tinged bronze in winter; pale, silver-grey fruits in the summer. **DP**



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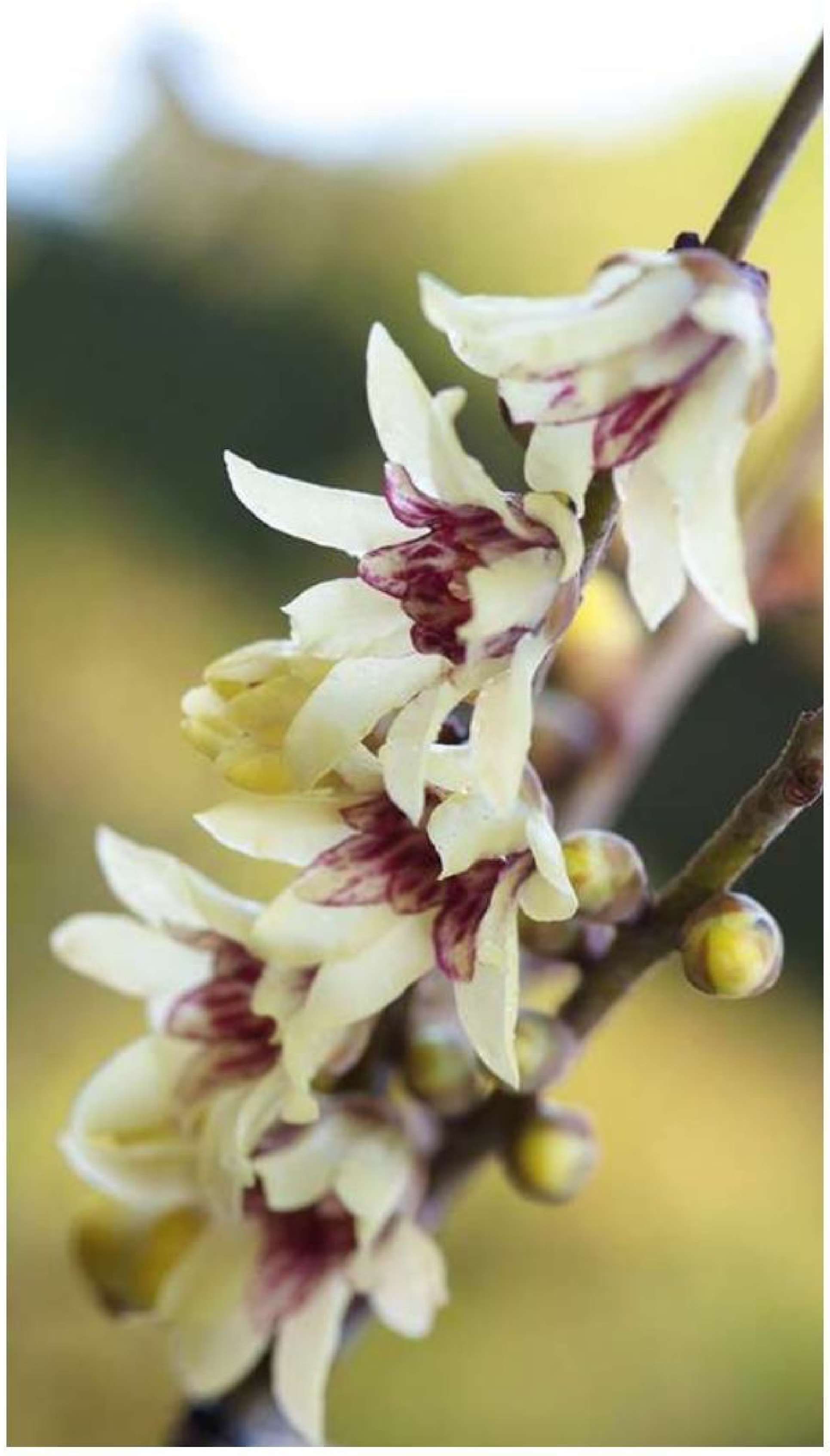


MAAYKE DE RIDDER

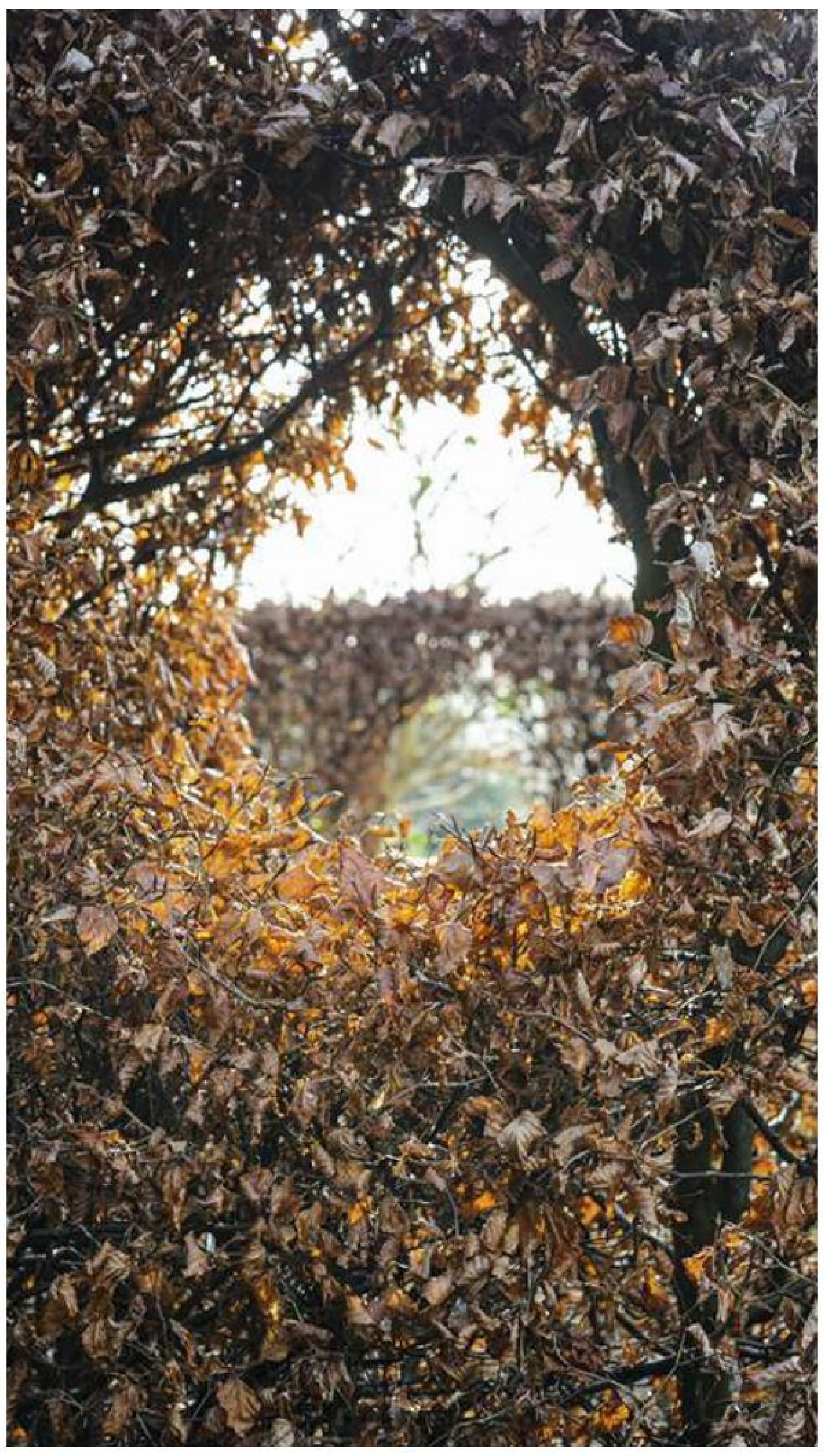
CHIMONANTHUS PRAECOX

Wintersweet is one of the most fragrant shrubs there is. It flowers in the middle of winter, normally well before the witch hazels emerge. The pale, waxy-yellow flowers with their purplish centre can be partially hidden by the old foliage that hasn't yet fallen, which makes for a striking yellow and green combination. But with a long flowering period you can also admire the flowers in their full glory on bare stems when all the leaves have been shed. Do remember to allow enough space when planting, because this shrub can eventually grow quite big.

Height 4m.
Origin China.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun or partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 6a-9b.
Season February to March. **HK**

RED-BROWN BARK PEELS OFF IN PAPERY CURLS TO REVEAL A PALE, ROSY LAYER BENEATH

ACER GRISEUM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FAGUS SYLVATICA

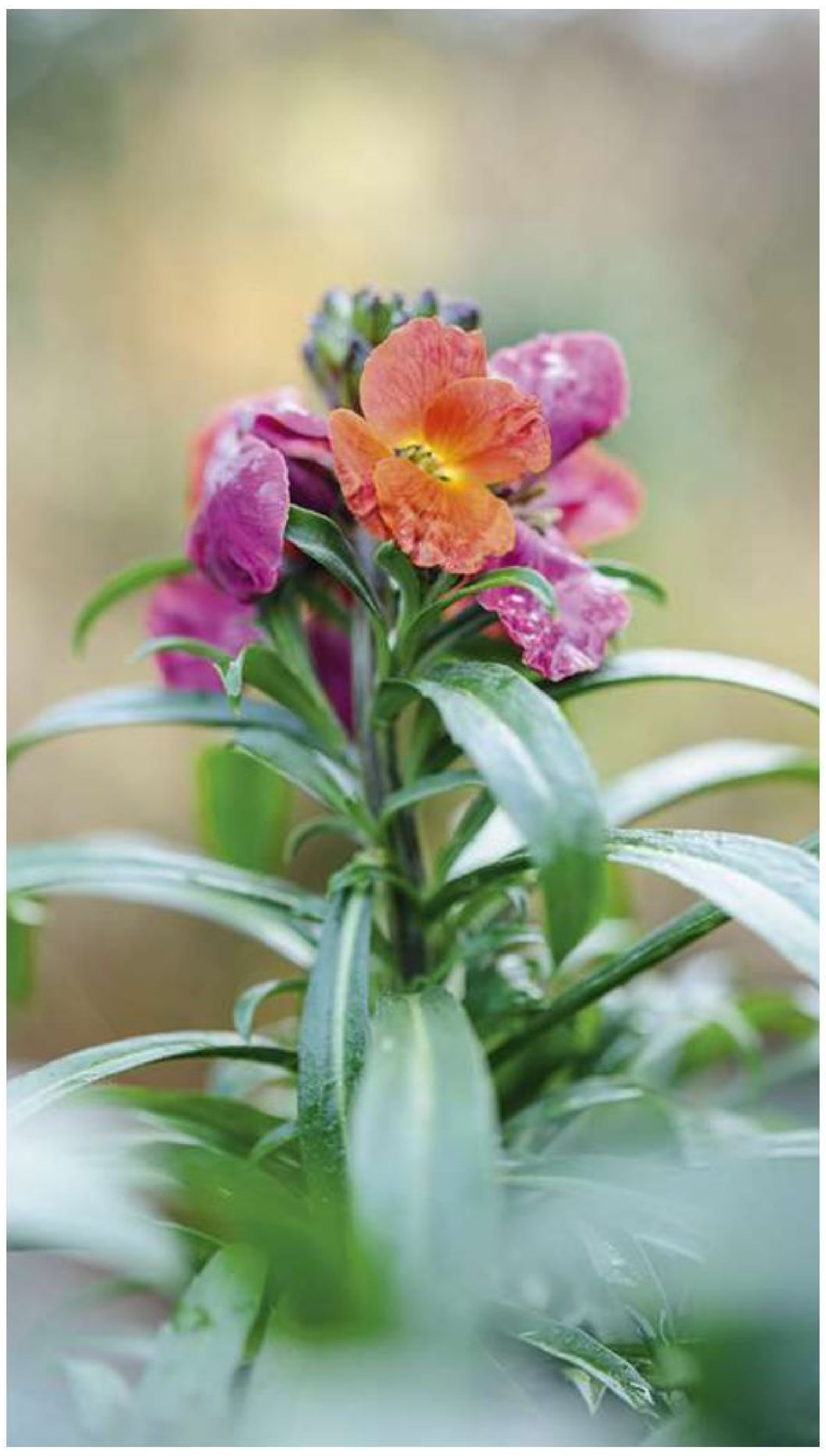
The common beech is one of our great plants. It makes the most beautiful of trees if allowed to grow but accommodates itself happily to being clipped to shape. The young growth holds its leaves all winter, so hedges (which are constantly cut back forcing them to make young growth) hold their leaves really well. We have made a circular hedge of beech inside which is an empty space lined with gravel, a place to rest your eyes from the hurly-burly of flowers in the rest of the garden. AGM.

Height Grows up to 50m as a tree, although it can be kept to 90cm if pruned annually.
Origin Europe.
Conditions Sun or light shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-7b.
Season All year round. **DW**

ERYSIMUM 'WINTER ORCHID'

All perennial wallflowers are worth growing, blooming for months and months. 'Winter Orchid' stands out from the rest because it comes into bloom in October and flowers sporadically throughout the winter months, culminating in an explosion of colour in early spring. The flowers are fragrant and larger than most wallflowers; copper-red when young, gradually turning purple, so there's an amazing array of colour. The plants are tidy, compact mounds. Like all perennial wallflowers it only lives a few years but cuttings root very easily.

Height 25cm.
Origin Bred in Germany, originally Europe.
Conditions Well-drained soil in sun.
Hardiness USDA 5a-8b.
Season October to May. **DW**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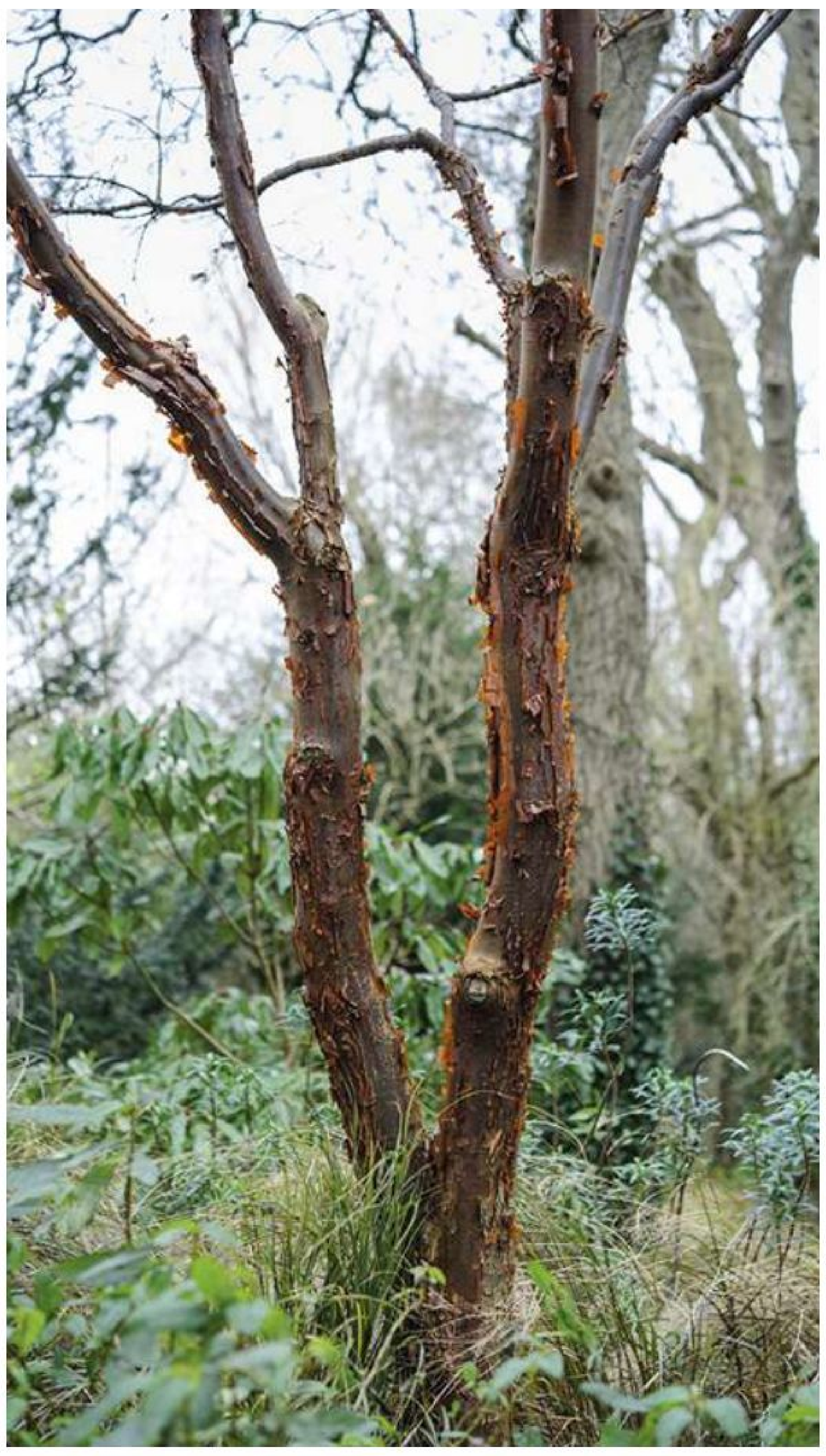
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ACER GRISEUM

This small tree is known as the paperbark maple because its beautiful, red-brown bark peels off in thin, paper-like curls to reveal the paler rosy-brown layer beneath. When the evening sun shines through the peeling bark the whole trunk seems to light up. It is a slender, slow-growing tree whose little leaves cast only light shade allowing other plants to grow well underneath it. In autumn the leaves turn orange and red, colouring better in sun. Beautiful as a specimen tree on its own or lined up where the evening sun can catch the bark. AGM.

Height 5-10m.
Origin China.
Conditions Sun or light shade in soil that's not too dry.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.
Season All year round. **DW**

HAMAMELIS X *INTERMEDIA* 'JELENA'

This is a lovely witch hazel for the winter garden. In December, ravelled trusses of dainty, ribbon-petaled flowers of yellow suffused with burnt orange are produced from stark, leafless twigs. The flowers, although small, are tolerant of winter weather and will continue well into January. The scent is good, and it is worth picking a sprig to bring indoors, although the flowers will not last long in the heat. 'Jelena' has exceptional autumn colour with leaves turning fiery red and orange. Plant in neutral to acidic soil that doesn't get too dry in summer, and prune after flowering only when necessary. AGM.

Height 4m.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Any soil, neutral to acidic, not waterlogged.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.
Season February to March. **MR**

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Naturalised bulb meadows *to suit every garden*

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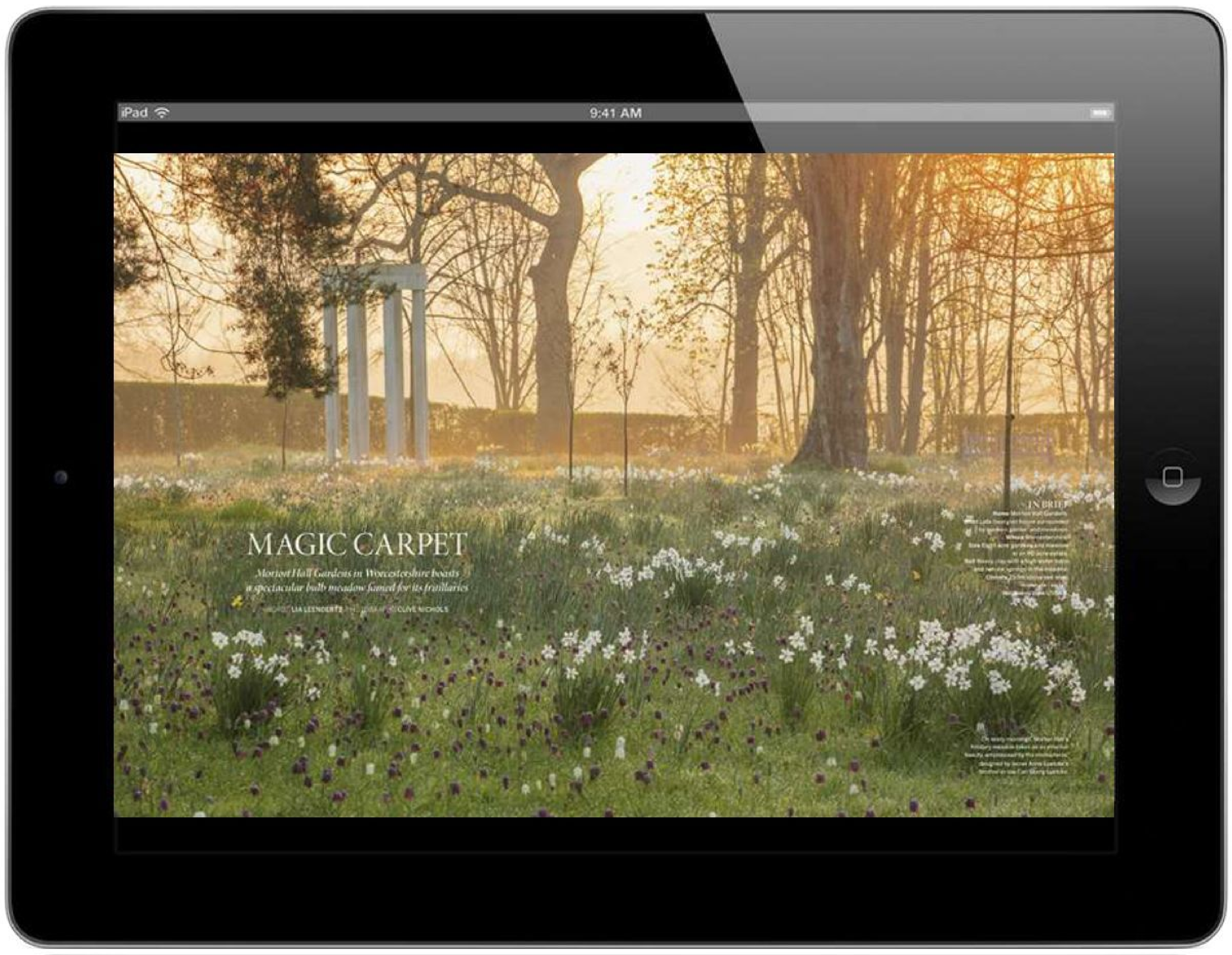
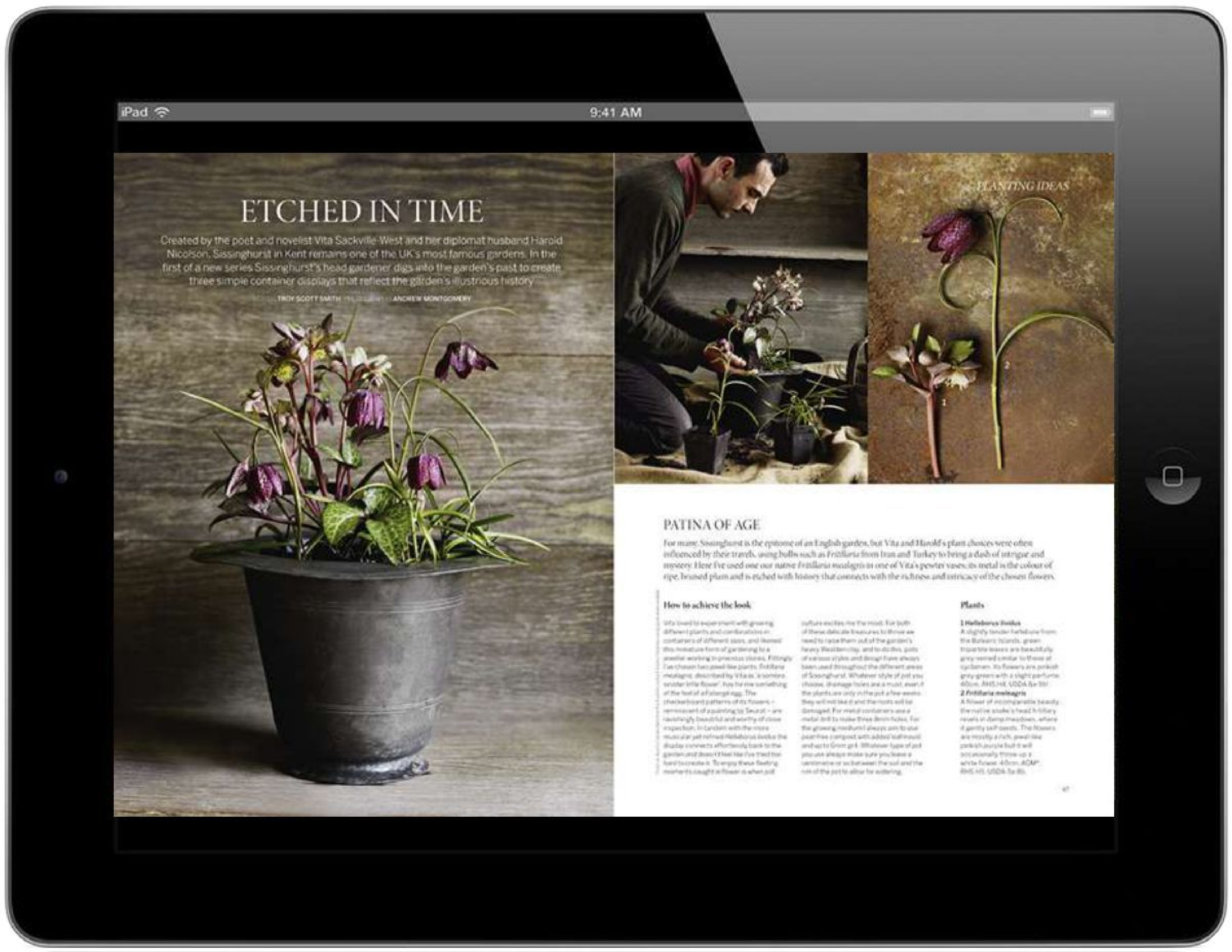

MAGIC CARPET
Morton Hall Gardens in Worcestershire boasts a spectacular bulb meadow famed for its fritillaries
IN BRIEF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Where to buy your plants

NOTE: several of these nurseries offer online or mail-order services only, or limited visiting times. Please call or check online before visiting.

ABI & TOM'S GARDEN PLANTS

Established in 2011 by Abi and Tom Attwood. Their selection of perennials, trees and shrubs is tried and tested to cope with Cumbria's challenging climate.
Halecat, Witherslack,
Cumbria LA11 6RT.
Tel 01539 552946,
abiandtom.co.uk

ARCHITECTURAL PLANTS

Focusing on the sculptural quality of plants, you'll find topiary, hardy palms, bamboos and rare evergreen trees – along with plenty of planting advice.
Stane Street, North Heath,
Pulborough, West Sussex
RH20 1DJ. Tel 01798 879213,
architecturalplants.com

ASHWOOD NURSERIES

Ashwood holds the National Collection of *Lewisia* and has an excellent range of hellebores, hepaticas, *Anemone pavonina*, auriculas and hardy cyclamen.
Ashwood Lower Lane,
Ashwood, Kingswinford,
West Midlands DY6 0AE.
Tel 01384 401996,
ashwoodnurseries.com

AVON BULBS

Chelsea gold-winning, mail-order outlet selling a comprehensive range of interesting and unusual bulbs. Its excellent online catalogue features about 700 plants.
Burnt House Farm, Mid
Lambrook, South Petherton,
Somerset TA13 5HE.
Tel 01460 242177,
avonbulbs.co.uk

AVONDALE NURSERY

This nursery and display garden has extensive collections of geums, eryngiums, heleniums, agapanthus and geraniums.
Mill Hill, Baginton,
Warwickshire CV8 3AG.
Tel 024 7667 3662,
avondalenursery.co.uk

BARNSDALE GARDENS

Barnsdale Gardens has many varieties of penstemons and hemerocallis as well as a wide range of other garden plants.
The Avenue, Exton, Oakham,
Rutland LE15 8AH.
Tel 01572 813200,
barnsdalegardens.co.uk

BETH CHATTO GARDENS

Beth Chatto's nursery is what you'd expect from one of the UK's most respected plantswomen. The display garden and nursery offer ideas for planting in difficult areas. More than 2,000 plants are available to buy, with an emphasis on herbaceous perennials and bulbs.
Elmstead Market,
Colchester, Essex CO7 7DB.
Tel 01206 822007,
bethchatto.co.uk

The Botanic Nursery.

JASON INGRAM

BINNY PLANTS

Specialising in new and unusual perennials, ferns and grasses, Binny Plants has a particularly good range of peonies, as well as euphorbias, geraniums, hostas and iris.
Binny Estate, Ecclesmachan,
West Lothian EH52 6NL.
Tel 01506 858931,
binnyplants.com

THE BOTANIC NURSERY

This nursery specialises in lime-tolerant plants, including home-grown foxgloves, ferns, grasses, perennials, shrubs and climbers. Good range of seeds, too.
Near Stonar School, Atworth,
Wiltshire SN12 8NU.
Tel 07850 328756,
thebotanicnursery.co.uk

BROADLEIGH BULBS

This nursery is renowned for its small bulbs, including an excellent range of cyclamens, snowdrops, crocuses, tulips and herbaceous plants.
Barr House, Bishops Hull,
Taunton, Somerset TA4 1AE.
Tel 01823 286231,
broadleighbulbs.co.uk

BURNCOOSE NURSERIES

More than 3,500 ornamental trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants are available at this nursery. Look out for rare and unusual magnolias and rhododendrons. **Gwennap,**
Redruth, Cornwall TR16 6BJ.
Tel 01209 860316,
burncoose.co.uk

CATH'S GARDEN PLANTS

This family-run nursery is set within the walls of an old walled garden. It stocks a wide range of herbaceous perennials, as well as a number of more unusual shrubs, grasses, ferns, herbs, wall shrubs and climbers.
Heaves Hotel, Heaves,
nr Levens, Cumbria LA8 8EF.
Tel 01539 561126,
cathsgardenplants.co.uk

CLAIRE AUSTIN HARDY PLANTS

Claire Austin holds the National Collection of bearded iris and hybrid herbaceous peonies. The nursery offers a good selection of these, as well as hemerocallis and other hardy plants.
White Hopton Farm,
Wern Lane, Sarn,
Newtown, Powys SY16 4EN.
Tel 01686 670342,
claireaustin-hardyplants.co.uk

CLIFTON NURSERIES

Clifton Nurseries offers an excellent range of plants, plus containers, sculpture, furniture, cut flowers and gifts. Two centres based in London and Surrey.
5A Clifton Villas, London W9
2PH. Tel 020 7289 6851.
Woburn Hill, Addlestone, Surrey
KT15 2QC. Tel 01932 833866,
clifton.co.uk

COBLANDS

This online garden centre delivers an array of plants, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, grasses, climbers, ferns, bamboos, bulbs and tools.
Trench Road, Tonbridge,
Kent TN11 9NG.
Tel 01452 742445,
coblands.co.uk

COTSWOLD GARDEN FLOWERS

Founded in 1991 by Bob Brown, Cotswold Garden Flowers is a small nursery specialising in unusual and easy-to-grow hardy herbaceous perennials and smaller shrubs. It holds the National Collection of *Sambucus*.
Sands Lane, Badsey, Evesham,
Worcestershire WR11 7EZ.
Tel 01386 833849, cgf.net

CROCUS

This online and mail-order nursery has won plenty of awards. It has a massive range of plants available, as well as gifts and tools. **Nursery Court, London Road, Windlesham, Surrey GU20 6LQ. Tel 01344 578111, crocus.co.uk**

CRÛG FARM PLANTS

Crûg Farm Plants specialises in unusual herbaceous perennials, climbers and shrubs. The nursery holds the National Collections of *Paris*, *Coriaria* and *Polygonatum*. **Griffith's Crossing, nr Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 1TU. Tel 01248 670232, crug-farm.co.uk**

DAISY ROOTS

Daisy Roots specialises in healthy, hardy perennial plants and grasses. **Jenningsbury, London Road, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG13 7NS. Tel 07958 563355, daisyroots.com**

DAVID AUSTIN ROSES

Think roses, and chances are the name that springs to mind is David Austin. This nursery is well worth a visit, particularly in early summer when the many different ramblers, climbers, modern shrubs and wild species are at their very best. **Bowling Green Lane, Albrighton, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV7 3HB. Tel 01902 376300, davidaustinroses.com**

DOVE COTTAGE NURSERY & GARDEN

Enjoying panoramic views of Shibden and Chelsea valleys and a hillside of mixed woodland, this nursery and garden features a wide range of perennials and grasses. **Shibden Hall Road, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX3 9XA. Tel 01422 203553, dovecottagenursery.co.uk**

Clifton Nurseries

DUCHY OF CORNWALL NURSERY

Set in an old slate quarry near Restormel Castle, this nursery sells 4,000 varieties of plants, including trees, shrubs, conifers, roses, perennials, fruit and half-hardy exotics. **Cott Road, Lostwithiel, Cornwall PL22 0HW. Tel 01208 872668, duchyofcornwallnursery.co.uk**

DYSON'S NURSERIES

William Dyson, curator at Great Comp Garden, runs this nursery specialising in salvias and offering an eclectic range of other choice and uncommon hardy and half-hardy plants. The salvia-filled adjoining garden is worth a visit. **Comp Lane, Platt, Borough Green, nr Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 8QS. Tel 01732 885094, dysonsalvias.com**

EDROM NURSERIES

Woodland plants are in abundance here, particularly trilliums, arisaemas, primulas and anemones. There is also an excellent range of alpines, bulbous plants, ferns and trees and shrubs. **Coldingham, Eyemouth, Berwickshire TD14 5TZ. Tel 01890 771386, edrom-nurseries.co.uk**

EDULIS

Paul Barney specialises in unusual and mostly edible perennial plants, many of them obtained on plant-hunting forays to locations including China and Chile. **1 Flowers Piece, Ashampstead, Reading, Berkshire RG8 8SG. Tel 01635 578113, edulis.co.uk**

ELIZABETH MACGREGOR NURSERY

Old and new varieties of violas are this nursery's speciality, alongside hardy geraniums, penstemons, campanulas, eryngiums, iris and primulas. The herbaceous garden is spectacular in midsummer. **Ellenbank, Tongland Road, Kirkcudbright, Dumfries & Galloway DG6 4UU. Tel 01557 330620, elizabethmacgregor nursery.co.uk**

FARMYARD NURSERIES

Among the nursery's wide range of plants is a fine selection of hellebores along with unusual herbaceous plants, tricyrtis and schizostylis, and garden plants including shrubs, trees and alpines. **Dol Llan Road, Llandysul, Carmarthenshire SA44 4RL. Tel 01559 363389, farmyardnurseries.co.uk**

FERNATIX

Owners Steven Fletcher and Kerry Robinson have turned a love of ferns into a thriving nursery and online/mail order business selling hardy ferns, greenhouse species and cultivars. **Stoke Ash, Suffolk IP23 7EN. fernatix.co.uk**

FIBREX NURSERIES

Fibrex is home to the National Collections of *Pelargonium* and *Hedera*. Set in the heart of the Warwickshire countryside, it specialises in hardy ferns and hellebores, all propagated and grown on site. **Honeybourne Road, Pebworth, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 8XP. Tel 01789 720788, fibrex.co.uk**

GREAT DIXTER NURSERY

The famous garden, created by the late plantsman Christopher Lloyd, is worth a visit in itself. Head gardener Fergus Garrett has continued Lloyd's legacy of bold, innovative planting at Great Dixter. The nursery, which stocks many of the plants grown on site, has a good selection of clematis, shrubs and perennials. There is also a good selection of seed to order online. **Northiam, Rye, East Sussex TN31 6PH. Tel 01797 254044, greatdixter.co.uk** ▷

Edulis.

ANNAICK GUITTENY

▷ HALL FARM

This award-winning nursery grows and propagates a wide range of herbaceous plants, including hardy geraniums, grasses, bog plants and marginal plants for pools. **Vicarage Lane, Kinnerley, nr Oswestry, Shropshire SY10 8DH. Tel 01691 682135, hallfarmnursery.co.uk**

HALLS OF HEDDON

This family-run nursery, established in 1921 by William Nicholson Hall, specialises in dahlias and chrysanthemums. **Heddon on the Wall, Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 0JS. Tel 01661 852445, hallsofheddon.co.uk**

HARDY'S COTTAGE GARDEN PLANTS

A wonderful treasure trove of plants run by Rosy Hardy. More than 1,200 herbaceous perennials are available at this award-winning nursery. They also breed and propagate their own varieties, including a range of gauras. **Priory Lane Nursery, Freefolk Priors, Whitchurch, Hampshire RG28 7NJ. Tel 01256 896533, hardys-plants.co.uk**

HARVEYS GARDEN PLANTS

Roger Harvey's nursery has a superb collection of hellebores. You'll also find an extensive range of herbaceous perennials and woodland plants. **Great Green, Thurston, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 3SJ. Tel 01359 233363, harveysgardenplants.co.uk**

HAYLOFT PLANTS

The selection offered here by six keen female gardeners reflects their interest in the origins and history of the plants they sell. **The Pack House, Manor Farm Nurseries, Pensham, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 3HB. Tel 01386 562 999, hayloft-plants.co.uk**

Lime Cross Nursery.

RACHEL WARNE

HOO HOUSE NURSERY

Large range of herbaceous and alpine plants, with display borders and garden holding the National Collection of *Platycodon* and *Gentiana asclepiadea*. **Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire GL20 7DA. Tel 01684 293389, hoohouse.co.uk**

JUNKER'S NURSERY

Excellent selection of hardy shrubs and trees, including *Acer*, *Betula*, *Magnolia* and *Viburnum*. **Higher Cobhay, Milverton, Somerset TA4 1NJ. Tel 01823 400075, junker.co.uk**

KEVOCK GARDEN PLANTS

This mail-order online plant centre offers a variety of interesting and unusual plants from all over the world. It is a truly international collection and many of the plants are tested in the owners' garden south of Edinburgh. **16 Kevock Road, Lasswade, Midlothian EH18 1HT. Tel 01314 540660, kevockgarden.co.uk**

KNOLL GARDENS

Neil Lucas has established this as one of the best places in the UK to buy grasses. Around 200 forms of ornamental grasses are available and there is a large display garden to visit. Neil holds the National Collection of *Pennisetum*. **Hampreston, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 7ND. Tel 01202 873931, knollgardens.co.uk**

LIME CROSS NURSERY

This nursery offers an extensive range of conifers, alongside home-grown shrubs, olive trees and topiary. **Herstmonceux, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 4RS. Tel 01323 833229, limecross.co.uk**

LONG ACRE PLANTS

This charming nursery specialises in unusual woodland perennials, and stocks an excellent range of bulbs and ferns. **Charlton Musgrove, Somerset BA9 8EX. Tel 01963 32802, plantsforshade.co.uk**

MADRONA NURSERY

Derek Jarman called this the most charming nursery in England. There is an excellent range of unusual trees, shrubs, perennials, ferns and grasses. **Pluckley Road, Bethersden, Kent TN26 3DD. Tel 01233 820100, madrona.co.uk**

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Run by the talented Graham Gough and Lucy Goffin, the nursery grows unusual herbaceous perennials and choice grasses. Specialities include kniphofias, agapanthus, miscanthus and molinias. **2 Marchants Cottages, Mill Lane, Laughton, East Sussex BN8 6AJ. Tel 01323 811737, marchantshardyplants.co.uk**

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PAN-GLOBAL PLANTS

Owner Nick Macer takes his list of rare and desirable plants very seriously, and the result is an exciting collection of trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, bamboos, exotics, climbers and ferns. **The Walled Garden, Frampton Court, Frampton-on-Severn, Gloucestershire GL2 7EX. Tel 01452 741641, panglobalplants.com**

PENNARD PLANTS

This nursery specialises in edible plants and seeds – many of which are heritage varieties. Agapanthus are also a speciality. Mail-order or open by appointment only. **The Walled Garden, East** ▷

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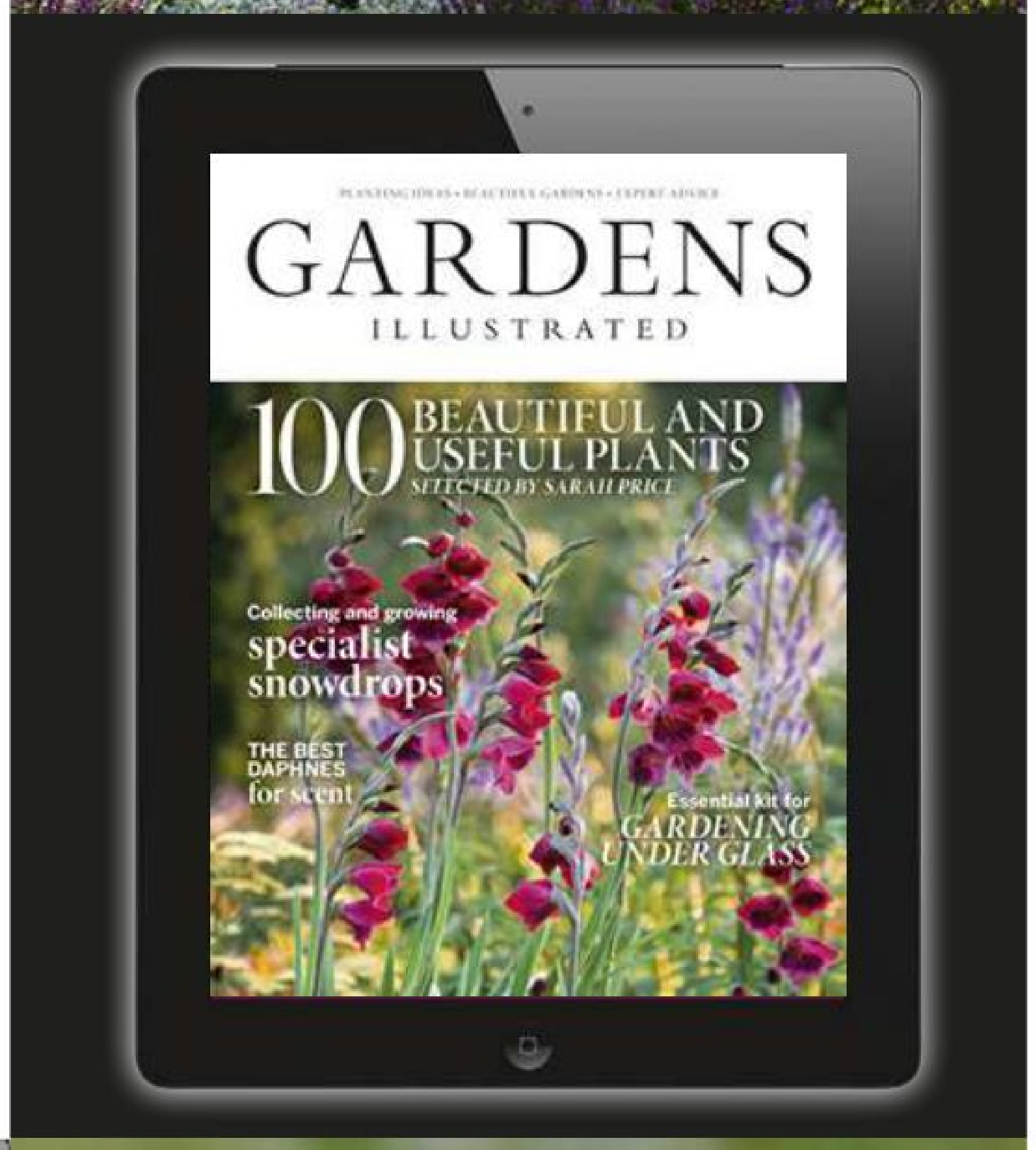
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An important diary date for enthusiastic gardeners, the Garden Show at Woburn Abbey is now in its ninth year. BBC *Gardeners' World* presenter Adam Frost and BBC Radio 4 *Gardeners' Question Time* expert, author and blogger Pippa Greenwood will be this year's headline experts, while there are ample shopping opportunities from some of the very best and award-winning nurseries the UK has to offer.

Set against the stunning backdrop of Woburn Abbey and with 42-acres of Abbey Gardens, the Garden Show offers visitors one of the best locations in the UK with 2018 marking an important year for Woburn Abbey as the Estate celebrates Humphry Repton's bicentennial year. The landscape Repton designed at Woburn Abbey Gardens and the surrounding deer park is his most complete and realised in existence. On display for the first time will be Repton's largest and most elaborate Red Book presenting his watercolour visualisations, forming part of the new Repton exhibition in the Abbey. Her Grace, the Duchess of Bedford will be officially opening recently restored Repton features in the Gardens during the show.

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COMPETITION

Enter our competition to win one of five pairs of tickets for the Woburn Abbey Garden Show, 23-24 June 2018.

For your chance to win, answer this question: **Which of the Dukes of Bedford commissioned Repton to work up a plan for the gardens?**

Enter by post – send your answer along with your name, address, telephone number and/ or email to: Gardens Illustrated/Woburn, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA.
Enter online at gardensillustrated.com
Closing date 31 May 2018.

Visit **woburnabbey.co.uk/gardenshow** for further information about the show and to book tickets. If you can't visit the show, don't worry – Woburn Abbey and Gardens is open daily to visitors until late October. Please visit the website for details. **woburnabbey.co.uk**

WOBURN
Abbey and Gardens

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▷ **Pennard, Somerset BA4 6TP.**
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This well-known Hampshire nursery, owned and run by plantswoman Marina Christopher, is open by appointment only, but offers an excellent line in perennials and grasses. The nursery's plant list is extensive and diverse.
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JASON INGRAM

SAMPFORD SHRUBS

This small nursery grows a range of common and uncommon garden-worthy plants. Owner Martin Hughes-Jones's next-door garden uses a range of plants throughout the year to provide dynamic structural interest. Heleniums are a particular feature.
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thorncroftclematis.co.uk

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This charming nursery offers an unrivalled selection of ericaceous plants, particularly camellias and blueberries, as well as azaleas, magnolias and rhododendrons.
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Dorset BH21 7ND.
Tel 01202 873490,
trehane.co.uk

WALLED GARDEN TREBERFYDD

Located in a Victorian walled garden, this recently established nursery stocks a range of hardy ornamentals and edibles – all grown in Wales.
Llangasty, Brecon, Powys,
Wales LD3 7PX.
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walledgardentreberfydd.com

WATERPERRY GARDENS

The shop at these famous gardens stocks an extensive range of trees, shrubs, perennials, alpines and fruit, most grown on site. The historic, eight-acre gardens have fine herbaceous borders that are well worth visiting. **Nr Wheatley,**
Oxfordshire OX33 1JZ.
Tel 01844 339226,
waterperrygardens.co.uk

WILDEGOOSE NURSERY

There's a diverse range of perennials and grasses here, but the main focus is hardy perennial and scented violas, including the long-established collection previously grown at Bouts Cottage Nursery.
Lower Millichope, Munslow,
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The centre at the RHS garden sells around 10,000 different plants, including a wide selection of hardy plants, as well as fruit trees, conservatory and houseplants, bulbs and seeds.
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What are hardiness ratings?

The hardiness ratings used in this book will help you get the best from your plants and your garden, but what exactly do they mean?

Throughout the book you'll find references to a plant's hardiness described using two separate scales: one from the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and the other from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Both are based on accumulated experience of a plant's ability to endure cold conditions, or in the UK, the ability to withstand changeable periods of freezing and relatively mild, wet weather. Plants adapt to tolerate cold to varying degrees. Some will take a light frost (temperatures just below freezing) for a couple of hours, others cope with long periods of freezing to remarkably low temperatures.

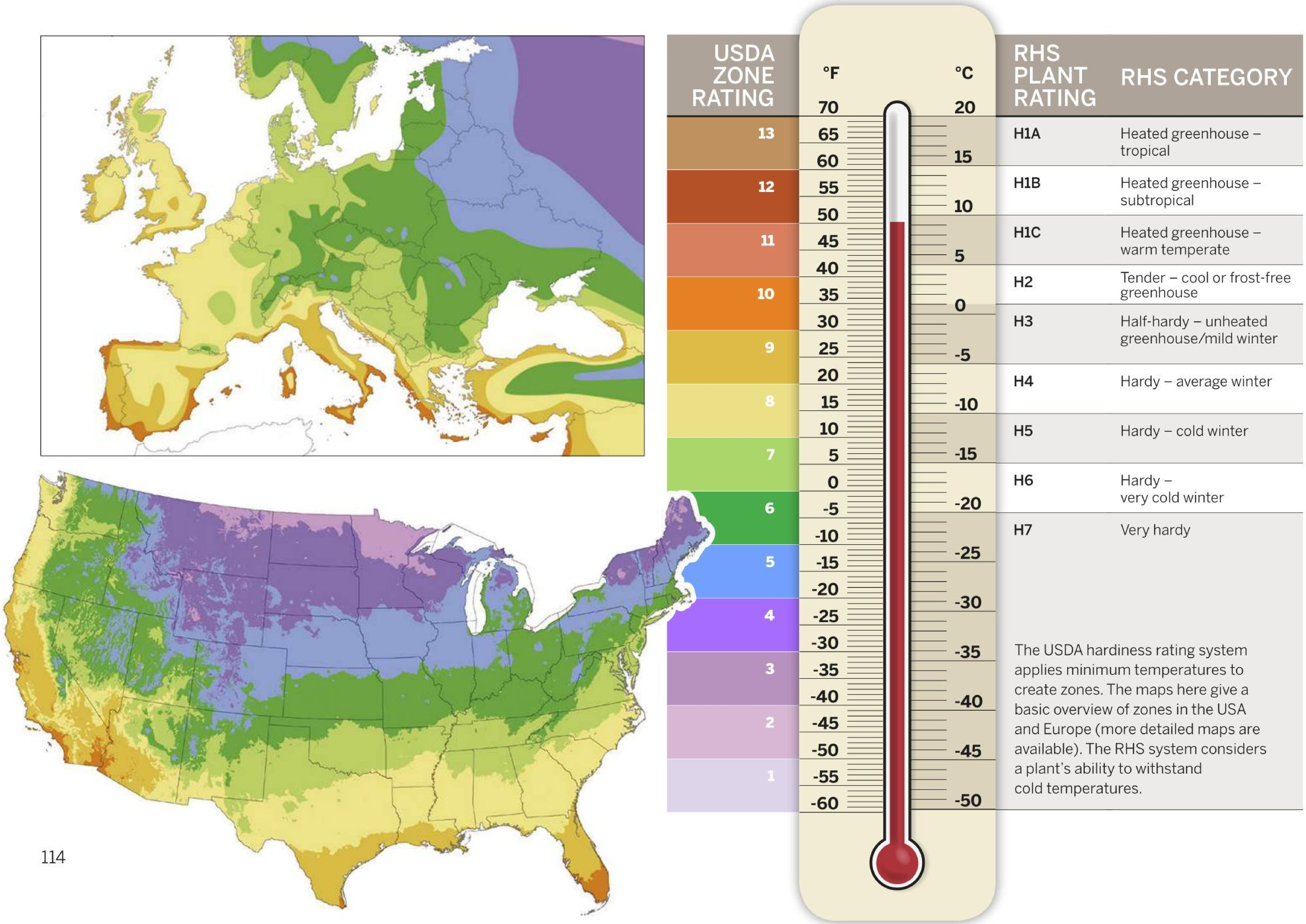
The USDA scale was developed in the 1960s for North America but it is now widely used in other countries around the world. It's based on minimum average temperatures in a range of zones – as shown in the two illustration below – which increase in steps of 10°F. These range from 1 (very hardy) to 13 (least hardy), with each divided into two 5°F subzones 'a' and 'b'. The US zones have been mapped in remarkable detail and plants can be assigned a rating according to the coldest zone in which they can grow or, as we have done here, a range of zones in which the plant is known to grow. This USDA system has been applied to the UK and Europe and gardeners here can use the mapped zones as a general guide.

The RHS scale, introduced in 2012, is a more descriptive system of hardiness ratings. Like the USDA system, it uses a scale (this time in 5°C steps) from H1 to H7, based on minimum winter temperatures. However, it has two major differences. The first is that it runs in the opposite direction to the USDA system – 1 is very tender, 7 is very hardy. It also offers a description for the garden conditions to help reflect the variable nature of UK winters. These are summarised in the scale below, but you can find more detailed descriptions on the RHS website. The most tender rating, H1, has been subdivided into three categories A, B and C.

Perhaps, though, the more important difference is that the RHS scale is a rating of the plant's hardiness and hasn't been translated into mapped zones for the UK.

All rating given in this book are accurate to the best of our knowledge. Where no RHS rating is available our contributors have in most cases rated the plant based on their own trials, while USDA scales are based on growers' experiences in the USA. Both are included as a guide only to help you predict what you should be able to grow in your garden. □

This guide is based on a longer feature that appeared in issue 229 of *Gardens Illustrated* by Dr John David, head of horticultural taxonomy, and Leigh Hunt, principal horticultural advisor, at RHS Wisley. Find out more about the scales at:
RHS hardiness ratings rhs.org.uk/plants/trials-awards/award-of-garden-merit/rhs-hardiness-rating
USDA hardiness maps planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb



RHS PLANT RATING	RHS CATEGORY
H1A	Heated greenhouse – tropical
H1B	Heated greenhouse – subtropical
H1C	Heated greenhouse – warm temperate
H2	Tender – cool or frost-free greenhouse
H3	Half-hardy – unheated greenhouse/mild winter
H4	Hardy – average winter
H5	Hardy – cold winter
H6	Hardy – very cold winter
H7	Very hardy

The USDA hardiness rating system applies minimum temperatures to create zones. The maps here give a basic overview of zones in the USA and Europe (more detailed maps are available). The RHS system considers a plant's ability to withstand cold temperatures.

ILLUSTRATION CHRIS JONES

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Terrarium Study Day
Saturday 8th September

Adam Frost's Introduction to Garden Design
Saturday 29th September

Christmas Flowers *with* Jonathan Moseley
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